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Heavy casualties in Somali fighting

MOGADISHU (AP) — Heavy casualties were reported in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, after rival factions of the ruling United Somali Congress (USC) battled for supremacy, sources said Saturday. Sources with radio contacts in Mogadishu said about 500 wounded made their way through the city Friday seeking treatment at the city's three hospitals and that many of them died. The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that many more casualties had been unable to reach the hospitals. They could not give more precise figures. The fighting erupted Thursday night between forces loyal to President Ali Mahdi Muhammad and those of General Mohamed Farrah Aidid, USC chairman and chief of parliament. By Saturday, fighting continued sporadically but Gen. Aidid appeared to have won control of most of the city, according to the sources. Mr. Ali Mahdi's whereabouts were unknown. In the past, during similar clashes, he has moved out of the city until the situation calmed, the sources said. The fighting is among the heaviest reported in Mogadishu since former President Mohamed Siad Barre fled the capital in January after a month of intense urban warfare between his forces and the USC.

Remote control plane crashes in Lebanon

BEIRUT (AP) — The Lebanese army command said a remote-controlled reconnaissance plane carrying Russian markings crashed in the mountains northeast of Beirut Saturday. Security forces were trying to determine who owned the plane, which crashed on Lakkouk Mountain, according to an army spokesman. "It is an unmanned reconnaissance plane with Russian writing on it," said the spokesman. State-run Radio Lebanon quoted unnamed security sources as saying Lebanese army units found the plane's engine "which carried coded letters. Security sources are trying to identify the plane." It added: "The sources believe the letters could be either Russian or Hebrew." The Voice of the People Radio also quoted unnamed security sources as saying: "It is believed that the remote-controlled reconnaissance plane which crashed on Lakkouk mountain is an Israeli aircraft." Israeli military officials said the aircraft was not one of theirs. The Voice of the People Radio said earlier an "unidentified object" was seen exploding in the sky over the Bakaa Valley east of the mountains.

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Fahd sends message to Rafsanjani

NICOSIA (AP) — Saudi Arabia's education minister arrived in Tehran Saturday with a message from King Fahd for Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani, Tehran Radio reported. The broadcast did not disclose the contents of the message brought by Abdul Aziz Al Khawater. He was received at Tehran's Mehrabad airport by Iran's Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, Mohammad Khatami. Mr. Khawater said he hoped discussions about "new topics" will enter a new phase, and our relations will improve more than ever. The radio did not elaborate on what he meant.

GCC chief sees viable force in five years

BAHRAIN (AP) — The secretary-general of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was quoted Saturday as saying he expected the alliance to have a viable collective security force within five years. Abdullah Al-Bishri, in an interview with the Abu Dhabi daily Al Itihad, said that the building of an indigenous Gulf force was the first stage of long-term security arrangements that the alliance was forging to defend its member states. "Within the next five years there will be a deterrent Gulf force," he said. The GCC groups Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. A two-brigade rapid deployment force of 10,000 men called Peninsula Shield which the alliance began forming in the 1980s was unable to deter the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2, 1990. With the end of the U.S.-led coalition that ended the Iraqi occupation, the GCC has been devising fresh security arrangements for the region. GCC military chiefs of staff recently met in the Omani capital of Muscat to work out yet undisclosed plans for developing the force. Some reports speak of a 100,000-strong Peninsula Shield as the target.

4 Sunni scholars killed in Pakistan

LAHORE, Pakistan (R) — Gunmen ambushed a car carrying Muslim scholars in Pakistan Saturday and opened fire, killing four of them in the third attack on Sunni Muslims in two days, police said. Four people died in the Punjab capital Lahore Friday night when grenades were thrown into a public meeting called by a militant Sunni group, the Anjuman Sipah-i-Sahaba. One died immediately and three in hospital on Saturday. Another leader was also injured in southern Punjab Friday when grenades were tossed into the compound of his home where he and his family were sleeping. Police said nobody had claimed responsibility for the attacks but the Punjab city of Jhang was put under indefinite curfew to prevent clashes between Sunnis and Shi'ite Muslims.

Ben Ali says arms cache found

TUNIS (R) — Tunisian President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali said Saturday a weapons factory and arms cache belonging to Muslim activists had been found in a Tunis suburb. He said the discovery was evidence of a "diabolical plot" to seize power by the outlawed Nahdha fundamentalist group, which the government said it thwarted in May. "We have discovered... a cache of arms and a veritable workshop for making arms and ammunition," Mr. Ben Ali told a meeting of the ruling party, the Constitution Democratic Assembly, Mr. Ben Ali gave no details of the arms found. But official sources said they included rifles and automatic weapons in a house in the Al Mourouj suburb. The sources said the occupants of the house were arrested when police raided it Wednesday night. The exiled leader of Nahdha, Rachid Ghannouchi, in May denied any plot to seize power and challenged the government to prove its accusations. Mr. Ben Ali told the meeting he was determined to let opposition parties into parliament, now monopolized by the ruling party.

U.S.-Israeli row flares over loan guarantees

Senators seen agreeable to Bush request for delay, but Israeli lobby gears up

Combined agency dispatches

DESPITE PRESIDENT George Bush's request for delay, Israel is asking for prompt approval of \$10 billion in U.S. loan guarantees to help in the settlement of tens of thousands of refugees from the Soviet Union.

Mr. Bush Saturday, along with Secretary of State James Baker and other top administration officials, called Senate members seeking agreement to block the request for now.

The calls to senators, which Mr. Bush began Friday and continued Saturday from the presidential retreat at Camp David, came after Israel refused to hold off on its bid for help.

Saturday, an Israeli foreign ministry official said Israeli Prime Minister David Levy has said that future Soviet immigration to Israel could be jeopardized if the United States fails to approve the loan guarantees.

The Israeli official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said Mr. Levy instructed Israeli Ambassador to Washington Zalmann Shoval to seek urgent consideration of the loan guarantee request, despite Mr. Bush's call for a delay. Mr. Shoval submitted the request to Mr. Baker on Friday.

Mr. Levy asked Mr. Shoval to tell Mr. Baker that "without the guarantee Israel would have no choice but to absorb immigration," the official said.

Mr. Shoval was also told to say Israel "may have difficulty absorbing those who have arrived," the official added.

Israel Radio said Saturday that Washington has offered Israel a compromise of tens of millions of dollars in extra financial aid to Israel as compensation for a delay in considering the guarantees.

The foreign ministry official had no information on the report. The guarantee would enable Israel to borrow the money from commercial banks at favorable rates with repayment stretched over 30 years.

"We hope this will be dealt with in the right spirit, in the right way," Mr. Shoval said after presenting Israel's request for the guarantee to Mr. Baker in a 70-minute meeting.

Earlier, Mr. Bush urged Congress to postpone action for 120 days. He said a debate in Congress, where Israel's supporters may attack the loan guarantees to an appropriations bill, could derail the Middle East peace conference the United States and the Soviet Union hope to co-sponsor next month.

"Let's not blow it," Mr. Bush declared.

Mr. Bush indicated displeasure with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's determination to go ahead with the formal aid request.

"We don't need an acrimonious debate just as we're about to get this peace conference convened," Mr. Bush told reporters at the White House.

Several prominent Democrats including Sen. Patrick Leahy, who heads a subcommittee that handles foreign aid appropriations, had signalled in advance their support for such a delay.

Democrat Sen. Claiborne Pell, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said Congress probably would agree to Mr. Bush's request for a delay.

Mr. Pell said he had not made up his mind. "I oppose settlements in the occupied territories, but Soviet Jews are not responsible for Israel's policy and should not be the ones to suffer for it," he said.

But Sen. Barbara Mikulski, another Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee, said she would insist on prompt approval of the guarantees.

"These loan guarantees should not be linked to anything," she said. "They are needed for humanitarian purposes."

And Republican Sen. Connie Mack said in a letter to Mr. Leahy that "if Congress delays the provision of loan guarantees for Israel it would be perceived by the Arab World as a clear invitation to link U.S. humanitarian aid to Israel's policy."

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Shamir hints at linking peace conference with Israeli demand

Combined agency dispatches

ISRAEL HAS for the first time hinted that refusal of its request for U.S. aid could affect its participation in an American-sponsored Middle East peace conference.

An Israeli counter-offensive began at home and in the United States after President George Bush asked Congress Friday to postpone for 120 days consideration of Israel's request for \$10 billion in loan guarantees.

Israel needs the guarantees so it can borrow more cheaply on world financial markets to re-settle one million Soviet Jewish immigrants expected by 1995.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir linked the request for guarantees to Israel's participation in a peace conference which Washington hopes to sponsor with Moscow in October.

Israel gave conditional approval to the conference in July after the Arabs agreed to attend. Mr. Bush and his Secretary of State James Baker are now trying to bring Palestinians under Israeli rule to the bargaining table.

"As... Baker said, everything has an impact, this might have an impact as well," Mr. Shamir told Israel Television's Arabic service, answering a question on whether a refusal of the guarantees would affect Israeli participation.

This was in marked contrast to his earlier attempts to deny any link between the guarantees and the peace process.

Asked if a U.S. refusal to grant the guarantees would affect the

peace process, Mr. Shamir said: "It is liable to."

But Mr. Shamir added that Israel had not set receiving the guarantees as a condition for joining the talks.

"There is no such condition," he said. "Objectively, this does not help. First, it makes Arab positions more extreme, it hardens their positions, and the results can be predicted."

Israel rejected a U.S. call to wait until after the peace conference and formally requested the loan guarantees Friday.

Its economy is too weak to absorb huge numbers of immigrants unaided and Mr. Shamir has mobilized the powerful Jewish lobby in the United States to win congressional support.

Mr. Shamir and his right-wing coalition partners have refused to stop settling Jews in the occupied territories. This has pitted them against Mr. Bush, who views the settlements as a major obstacle to the peace process.

Mr. Shamir has angered Washington by speeding up settlement during Mr. Baker's post-Gulf war peace missions to the region.

"We will take no chance of unravelling the peace process," Mr. Bush said, announcing the request for a guarantee delay. "We want to give peace a chance... this is no time to inflame passion on both sides."

An influx of American money would anger Arabs just over one week before Mr. Baker is due back in the Middle East to convince Palestinians to attend peace talks.

Israel has pledged not to use U.S. aid to settle Jewish newcomers in the occupied territories. But the immigrants' presence is an already tight

housing market encourages other Israelis to take up cheap government loans to move to the West Bank and Gaza.

"The American guarantees are most crucial to our success in absorbing the immigrants," and their absence could cut the immigration flow, Central Bank Governor Yacov Frankel said.

Israel's inflation-ridden economy could also be forced to "borrow larger sums that we don't have" and pay back the loans at crippling interest rates," Mr. Frankel added.

Israel now needs \$30 billion in loans to resettle the Soviets over the next five years.

Foreign Minister David Levy has said that future Soviet immigration to Israel could be jeopardized if the United States fails to approve the housing loan guarantees, a ministry official said Saturday.

Israel Radio said meanwhile that Washington has offered Israel a compromise of tens of millions of dollars in extra financial aid to Israel as compensation for a delay in considering the guarantees.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, had no information on the report. As Washington's largest foreign aid recipient, Israel now receives \$3 billion in annual civilian and military assistance.

The guarantees sought by Israel are to borrow money from banks at preferred interest rates to build housing and provide jobs for 300,000 Soviet arrivals since 1989 and hundreds of thousands more expected over the next two years.

Israeli ambassador to Washington Zalmann Shoval submitted the request to Secretary Baker on Friday.

Finance Minister Yitzhak Mordechai was expected also to hand the request

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Soviet Union splits but leaders call for economic integration

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Soviet republics are parting company with their former Kremlin rulers but will continue to work together in a framework similar to the European Community (EC), acting Soviet Prime Minister Ivan Silayev said Saturday.

A day after the Baltic states seceded independence, Mr. Silayev called for an economic agreement embracing both former Soviet republics and Central European nations, standing side-by-side with the mighty EC.

"There might be doubts about the number of countries that will join such an agreement — maybe Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Poland and Hungary," he told a Moscow meeting of the Geneva-based World Economic Forum.

"We believe we will have a similar arrangement to what you have now," he said in reference to current EC cooperation on trade and economic policies.

But it is doubtful that Central European nations, some of which are bidding for EC membership, will be keen on marrying their economies to Moscow again so soon after divorcing the old Soviet Union. Hungary has already reacted coolly to the idea.

The Baltic states, independent after half a century of Soviet control, have also said they want to distance themselves as much as possible and look to the West.

But they have been cooperating in working out an agreement with Soviet republics.

Mr. Silayev, prime minister of the Russian Federation, the biggest Soviet republic, has been effective head of the Soviet government since last month's failed coup by hardliners in the Communist Party, army and security services.

His vision of preserving some sort of "common economic space" in the face of republican independence demands was shared by Eduard Shevardnadze, a leader of the New Democratic Reform Movement.

But the white-haired Georgian wanted to expand it further, building bridges between East and West as he did during his term as Soviet foreign minister.

Mr. Shevardnadze resigned in December with a dramatic warning of impending dictatorship.

Mr. Shevardnadze said Saturday that he blamed himself partly for the rapid crumbling of the union by not offering the republics autonomy earlier.

"Perhaps I, above all, should have understood since I should have known what the nationalism problems might lead to," Mr. Shevardnadze said in British radio interview.

Mr. Shevardnadze is now at odds with the leaders of Georgia

who have declared independence.

"Of course I realised we should be resolving certain things more quickly, more decisively. That perhaps was my mistake," he added, speaking through an interpreter.

"You know, if we'd offered our republics a deal like the new union — even less than that — three years ago, they'd have all signed it straight away."

Mr. Shevardnadze, who resigned last year after predicting the coup attempt by hardliners, also said the Soviets urgently need a new democratic party. His big fear now, he said, was food riots this winter.

On the breakup of the Soviet Union, Mr. Shevardnadze said the old union had not "collapsed entirely."

He added he believed that in an international crisis, such as last year's Gulf war, the independent republics and Moscow would have a single policy.

"There's got to be a common economic space, a proper military strategy and single foreign policy," Mr. Shevardnadze said.

"It's becoming more and more likely that they'll become members of the United Nations. Surely, then, the Soviet Union would stay on the Security Council and the'll want it to represent their agreed position."

Ceasefire holding in W. Sahara

RABAT (Agencies) — A ceasefire in the desolate Western Sahara appeared to be holding Saturday, a day after the U.N. proclaimed a formal peace in a territory torn by desert war for 15 years.

Morocco and the Polisario Front both said they would respect the ceasefire in the thinly-populated former Spanish colony. Blue-beretted U.N. troops were fanning out to areas where they will man a chain of observation posts.

Both Morocco and Polisario guerrillas said the ceasefire appeared to be holding.

A 2,800-strong U.N. force of soldiers and civilians will organise a referendum in January to enable the people of the phosphate-rich territory to decide on self-rule under Polisario or integration with Morocco.

U.N. sources said Saturday that 30 observer force soldiers in combat dress arrived in Moroccan army trucks at the town of Smara 155 kilometres east of Laayoun and other 50 were to arrive later in the day.

Abdul Aziz said at a news conference Friday night his guerrillas would scrupulously respect the ceasefire.

Ahmad Alaoui, Moroccan minister of state without portfolio, said in an editorial published Friday "violations of the ceasefire cannot come from Morocco but from external elements trying to penetrate" Western Sahara.

He said Polisario guerrillas were based outside the territory (in neighbouring Algeria and Mauritania) and it was "up to the U.N. to strictly control the activity of these elements."

Last month Moroccan troops crossed their defence lines along the disputed territory's eastern borders to strike at what the Rabat government called Polisario infiltrators.

Polisario chief Mohammed

Jordan sees Washington move as highly positive

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan Saturday welcomed the request of U.S. President George Bush to delay congressional debate on \$10 billion in loan guarantees to Israel.

Foreign Minister Abdullah Ensur praised the American move, but he criticised Israel for obstructing efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East.

"The American position is positive and constructive and it is consistent with the public U.S. policy that building Israeli settlements in the occupied territories is an obstacle to peace," Mr. Ensur was quoted as saying by the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

He said: "We hope that this American position will continue because it will reveal Israel's real intentions on peace efforts."

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker had asked Israel to postpone its request for \$10 billion in loan guarantees until after a proposed Middle East peace conference in October.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir rejected the appeal. President Bush Friday asked Congress to delay considering the request for four months.

Israel wants the loans to help absorb about one million Soviet Jewish immigrants expected by 1995.

Jordan, along with other Arab

states, demands to halt Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. Washington also considers the settlement-building an obstacle to peace.

Jordan is seeking assurances that Israel will comply with U.N. resolutions calling for its withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories.

A Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official Saturday welcomed the request by President Bush to delay congressional debate on the Israeli request for loan guarantees.

Khaled Al Hassan, head of foreign affairs in the Palestine National Council (PNC), described Mr. Bush's action as "positive."

Mr. Hassan, in a communique, said Mr. Bush's "positive measure" was taken "in the face of Israeli greed" and corresponded with a "sincere and humane attitude" of the Palestinians.

The PLO's Central Committee decided Friday to ask the U.N. Security Council for help in persuading Israel to allow 86 Palestinians from the occupied territories to attend an upcoming meeting of the PNC.

The council is expected to meet in about two weeks in Algiers to discuss the proposed peace conference.

France: Palestinians must choose their negotiators

PARIS (AP) — President Francois Mitterrand, in an interview published Saturday, said the Palestinians must be allowed to choose freely their representatives to a Middle East peace conference.

Implicitly rejecting conditions posed by Israel, Mr. Mitterrand told the United Arab Emirates (UAE) official news agency that the planned peace conference would fail unless the Palestinians could choose an "authentic" delegation.

Mr. Mitterrand's office released the text of the interview, conducted in advance of a visit to France Monday by the UAE's president, Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan.

"For the peace talks to be fruitful it is important to ensure an authentic Palestinian representation... which could commit the Palestinians to a (peace) settlement," Mr. Mitterrand said.

"What purpose would there be in a dialogue with representatives whose legitimacy would be open to question?" Mr. Mitterrand asked. "The Palestinians must be able to choose freely their representatives, and it is incumbent on the different concerned parties to respect their wishes."

Israel has accepted a U.S.-Soviet invitation to join a peace conference only on condition that no members of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and no Palestinian residents of Arab East Jerusalem participate.

He said any lasting settlement

Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip as illegal, saying Israel's continued drive to settle Jews in the occupied territories raised suspicion about its intentions in the proposed talks.

Mr. Mitterrand denied that France and its European partners have been sidelined by the United States, which is leading current efforts to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

"France and Europe had set the modulations of the settlement on the basis of the respect of right and justice and are continuing their work... the European Community intends to play an active role in the framework of the forthcoming peace conference in which it will take part as an observer," he said.

When asked what would France do if Israel refused to implement U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 that call for its withdrawal from the occupied territories in return for peace, Mr. Mitterrand said:

"All conflicts in the Middle East should be settled according to the same principles. France, which has contributed actively in implementing U.N. resolutions and to impose the respect of legitimacy in the Gulf, is in a position to remind (the world) of that."

He said any lasting settlement

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Palestinian shot and wounded in Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — A Palestinian man was shot at close range and seriously wounded Saturday in a parking lot outside the old Walled City's Jaffa Gate, police said.

They said the victim, identified only as a resident of the nearby village of Akab, was rushed to Hadassah Hospital in Ein Karem in serious condition.

The motive for the attack was unclear and under investigation. A police spokesman said the victim was shot "as he was about to get into his car" in the Mamilla lot, which is across the street from Jaffa Gate at about 1100 GMT.

A Ford escort automobile was spotted fleeing the scene, his statement added. It did not say whether it bore yellow Israeli license plates or blue plates which are issued to Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

Police conducted wide searches for suspects and closed off other

main entrances to East Jerusalem, witnesses said.

In other weekend violence four firebombs were thrown Friday night at a home owned by Israeli Housing Minister Ariel Sharon in the Old City, causing no injuries or damage, police said.

Two of the bombs ignited on the balcony and the other two in the backyard. There were no injuries and only slight damage was caused.

Mr. Sharon bought the home in the Muslim quarter several years ago. He spends little time at the house, which has become a target for demonstrations and stone-throwing by Palestinians.

The bodies of two Palestinians were discovered in the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip Friday, Israel Television said.

A 49-year old resident of the Nasserat refugee camp was found dead in Muwazi. In Khan Yunis, Palestinians found the body of a Gaza resident.

France ready for bilateral security formulas in Gulf

BAHRAIN (AP) — French President Francois Mitterrand was quoted Saturday as saying France was ready to enter into bilateral security arrangements with individual Gulf countries.

Mr. Mitterrand made the statement in an interview with Abu Dhabi's official news agency WAM before a visit to Paris starting Monday by United Arab Emirates (UAE) President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan.

The French president told the agency, monitored in Bahrain, that preserving the security and stability of the Gulf region after two major wars is now "an international priority."

It was up to the Gulf littoral states to define the measures needed for their defence and "then the United Nations can guarantee the arrangements," he said.

France, he said, "is ready on a bilateral level... if it is asked to do so, to lend its support in accordance with formulas that get defined."

Mr. Mitterrand's interview follows Washington's announcement that its 10-year security pact with Kuwait may be followed by similar arrangements with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the UAE.

Kuwait is also reportedly planning a similar pact with Britain, which together with France were the main Western powers in the U.S.-led coalition that waged the Gulf war to end Iraq's seven-month occupation of Kuwait.

The six Arab countries are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) alliance. They are all armed by the West but the UAE among them has the closest military ties with France.

Mr. Mitterrand said that France was following up the GCC discussions on the pertinent military arrangements to guarantee security after the Gulf war and the earlier eight-year Iraq-Iran war.

Mr. Mitterrand did not directly back Iran's persistent demand for participation in regional security arrangements but he said the dialogue with Iran "must allow all Gulf littoral states the same objectives in the field of security."

France's relations with Iran have been improving after Tehran's years of rifts with Western powers, and Mr. Mitterrand noted in the interview that he has accepted in principle an invitation from President Hashemi Rafsanjani to visit Tehran.

Turning to Lebanon, a country with which France has historical



Francois Mitterrand

connections, Mr. Mitterrand said he was satisfied that security had spread over a large part of the country after 16 years of civil war. He said Lebanon's government was gradually regaining authority.

He added: "We must look from now to the withdrawal of the foreign forces" from the country.

France traditionally supports Lebanon's Christian Maronite community and is the exile home of former Lebanese army commander Michel Aoun, who led a rebellion against the Syrian-backed government and the presence of Syrian troops in Lebanon. Israel also has a military presence in South Lebanon.

WAM's interview ran in the Arabic language.

Iraq criticises U.S., U.K. for accepting Kuwaiti claims

UNITED NATIONS (R) — An Iraqi U.N. diplomat criticised the United States and Britain Friday for accepting Kuwait's account of an alleged Iraqi landing on the emirate's Bubiyan Island that was later disputed by U.N. investigators.

"That U.S. and British stand really encouraged an already-hostile Western media to launch yet another campaign of lies and fabrication against Iraq," Iraqi United Nations Charge d'Affaires Sabah Talat Kadra told a news conference.

He said the U.N. findings were an objective refutation of Kuwait's "false allegations" and showed that "American and British circles" who accepted them without question were biased and displayed an irresponsible attitude towards Iraq.

The United States and Britain last week expressed concern over the incident and the U.N. Security Council authorised its president to warn Iraq against any repetition of this and other alleged incursions into Kuwaiti territory.

Kuwait had charged that some 80 armed Iraqis wearing civilian clothes disembarked from two armed boats and attacked

Bubiyan Aug. 28. It said 43 captured and the remainder hid out on the island.

Kuwait also said a dozen Iraqi navy boats based on the Fao peninsula supported the intruders but that Kuwaiti planes destroyed seven and that the other five fled.

A U.N. report Wednesday said an investigation by the U.N. Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNKOM) found that a detachment of four Kuwaiti coastguard boats took custody of 11 Iraqi fishing vessels and one speedboat in the waters off Bubiyan, together with their crews, totalling 45 persons.

No one was taken from Iraqi crews had collected ammunition and other items on Bubiyan for financial gain, UNKOM found no evidence there had been weapons on the Iraqi boats or that the Kuwaiti coast guard vessels had been fired on from two points on Bubiyan, as alleged by Kuwait.

The report also said UNKOM patrols had not so far noticed any Iraqi naval presence at the maritime facility from which Kuwait said 12 Iraqi military boats had sailed towards Bubiyan.

U.N. secretary-general outlines Tehran agenda

NICOSIA (Agencies) — U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar said Saturday that Gulf security, Afghanistan, and full implementation of U.N. Resolution 598, which ended the Iran-Iraq war in August 1988, will be the focus of discussions on his upcoming trip to Tehran.

Tehran Radio, monitored in Nicosia, quoted him as saying in an exclusive interview in London, that "if Iranian officials want to raise any other issue, I would be happy to discuss it."

Mr. Perez de Cuellar is expected in Tehran Tuesday.

His main task if believed to be to try and broker an exchange of Western hostages held by pro-Iranian Lebanese factions for Arab prisoners held by Israel.

But the Iranians, who deny involvement in hostage-taking, are unlikely to want to concentrate on the issue of the hostages.

The Iranians want full implementation of Resolution 598. The issue of identifying responsibility for the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, and paying war reparations, included in the resolution, has yet to be settled. The Iranians blame Iraq for starting the conflict.

Iranian officials also insist that security in the Gulf should be provided by the regional countries, not by the United States or other Western countries.

Iran wants to be the major player in a Gulf security pact.

Tehran also wants the civil war in Afghanistan ended.

The Iranians insist Shiite Afghans, who constitute a small minority but practice the brand of Islam predominant in Iran, to be included in any future government.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar leaves for Paris over the weekend to address a policy forum on African development Monday before flying to Tehran the following day.

While in Tehran the secretary-general "would be ready to listen" if the issue of hostages and prisoners held in the Middle East were raised, a U.N. spokesman said.

But he stressed that the trip to Iran, first announced on Aug. 27, and also to Saudi Arabia, would focus on Afghanistan and unimplemented parts of Resolution 598.

Saudi paper urges Arabs to back U.S. stand on Mideast

NICOSIA (R) — A Saudi Arabian newspaper on Saturday urged Arab countries to back the U.S. stand on the Middle East to avert foiling peace moves in the region.

Al Madina was commenting on an Israeli request to the U.S. for \$10 billion in loan guarantees to help absorb Soviet immigrants. President George Bush has urged Congress to delay action for four months to keep Middle East peace efforts on track.

"A big battle has actually begun within the American Congress, led by the organised Zionist lobby, to secure the required guarantees," the paper said in an editorial carried by the official Saudi Agency monitored in Nicosia.

"The Arab clear stand on the issue is to project the American position. Any failure to adopt a firm attitude may weaken the American administration's capability to adhere to its position," it added.

Al Madina said that to resolve the issue, "Arab diplomacy should take action at the highest level within the American Congress to foil Zionist moves and prevent aborting a last chance for

peace in the Middle East."

Most Arab countries support joint U.S.-Soviet plans for a Mideast peace conference between Israel and the Arabs based on U.N. Security Council resolutions pledging an exchange of occupied territory for peace.

In Cairo, the semi-official Al Ahram newspaper said chances of resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict were very small as long as the Jewish state received loans to resettle Jews in the occupied territories.

Even if the peace conference, takes place "the chance to resolve (the crisis) and getting legitimate rights (for Palestinians) will remain very small," the paper said.

"Most likely the countries calling for, sponsoring or supporting the conference will consider the conference will consider Israel's participation a great gain... which must be met with a reward of aid and loans (to the Jewish state)."

"The holding of settlements and encouraging immigration will continue while the conference stumbles... until sooner or later the conference will fail, perhaps after years, along with whatever is left of the occupied (Arab) lands," Al Ahram said.

Israeli soldier in Qom — report

KUWAIT CITY (AP) — Israeli airman Ron Arad, who has been missing in Lebanon since 1986, is being held in a military camp near the Iranian holy city of Qom, Iranian sources were quoted as saying Saturday.

In a front-page report from Tehran, the daily Sawt Al Kuwait (Voice of Kuwait) said Mr. Arad was flown to Iran "around four months ago" and that only five people knew of it, including Hajj Riza Askari, the commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guard contingent in Lebanon.

Iran has denied a claim by a source in the pro-Syrian, mainstream Shiite Muslim Amal militia in Lebanon that Mr. Arad had been moved to Iran. It blamed the report on a rumor spread by "certain Zionist circles."

According to Sawt Al Kuwait, the Iranian sources said Iran would not mind separating the issue of Mr. Arad and two other Israeli servicemen held by the Lebanese protegee, Hizbollah, from the issue of the Western hostages in Lebanon.

It was unclear whether such a step would speed up or delay the release of the Western hostages.

Their fate has been tied to freedom for seven Israeli soldiers missing in Lebanon and 400 Arabs held by Israel and its proxy Lebanese militia. But the hostages' release seems to have bogged down as Israel tries to get definite word on its missing men.

Israel demands such information before releasing Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners in exchange for its soldiers or their remains, a step that could lead to freeing the 11 Westerners missing in Lebanon.

The prisoners include a Hizbollah activist, Sheikh Abdul Karim Obeid, who was kidnapped from his home in South Lebanon by Israeli paratroopers in 1989.

The paper quoted the sources as saying that some mediators, including Israeli arms dealer Yacov Nimrod, are currently making contacts between Tehran and Tel Aviv to deal with the issue of Mr. Arad and two servicemen believed held by Hizbollah.

Iran has informed Israel through the (unnamed) mediator it was ready to exchange the three Israeli soldiers with... Obeid and five members of Hizbollah held in Israel," the paper quoted the sources as saying.

Sawt Al Kuwait quoted the unidentified sources as saying Mr. Arad's removal from Lebanon to Iran was "one of the boldest and most important operations carried out by the Revolutionary Guard with the help of Iran's intelligence apparatus."

The sources said the decision to move Mr. Arad was taken after Lebanese and Syrian patrols began searching the areas close to where Mr. Arad was held. They did not say where.

Once the decision was taken, Mr. Askari took his "well-known" van from the Sheikh Abdullah barracks in Baalbek, where some of the hostages are believed held, and drove to Damascus, according to the sources.

On his way, he stopped "somewhere at a small cafe," where three members of the Revolutionary Guard were waiting for him with Mr. Arad, whose face had been covered with bandages so he could pass as a wounded Revolutionary Guard member.

The sources said that Mr. Askari accompanied the four men to a plane belonging to Iran Airways that was waiting to fly them to Iran.

Both Iranian and Lebanese Shiite officials have been blaming Israel for delaying the release of the Western hostages by refusing to release Arab prisoners, despite last month's release of two hostages, a Briton and an American, by Lebanese militias.

Defence in Petra Bank cases points indirect finger at Ahmad Chalabi

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Several junior-level executives and officials who served the collapsed Petra-Bank under its former Chairman Ahmad Chalabi sought to prove in court Saturday that they were only obeying orders from Dr. Chalabi and had very little to do with political and operations which violated Jordanian banking regulations.

Maher Waked, member of an experts' committee which investigated the Petra Bank scandal under a mandate from the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ), was subjected to five hours of cross-examination by defence lawyer Hanna Naddah in the military court trying the cases.

Dr. Waked last week concluded three days of testimony involving 28 cases related mostly to foreign operations of Petra Bank under the Chalabi management. Cross examinations started Saturday and are expected to continue.

The defence lawyer brought out key elements of the Jordanian banking laws and accepted norms and practices in support of his argument that his clients played no other role in the violations except carrying out executive orders from Dr. Chalabi and people close to him in the highest echelons of the former management of Petra Bank.

Dr. Naddah sought to prove that the defendants he represented — Issa Khoury, an assistant manager at Petra Bank, Khalil Zaiter, another Petra Bank official, and several others — did not have anything to do with the decisions to undertake any operations in violation of regulations laid down by the CBJ but were doing what they were told if only for the sake of keeping their jobs.

One of the cases cited as an example in court was related to the leasing of a ship by the Beirut-based Middle East Banking Corporation (MEBCO), which was controlled by Dr. Chalabi and some of his family members.

The lease, involving several million dollars, was guaranteed by Petra Bank in a document furnished to MEBCO Geneva, also a Chalabi-controlled affiliate of the Lebanese firm.

Jordanian regulations prohibit such undertakings, and Petra Bank acted "in total disregard of the laws and rules of Jordan," Dr. Waked said.

The shipping lease fell through but Petra Bank actually suffered the loss since it had to meet the

legal obligation it undertook under the guarantee it furnished, according to Dr. Waked.

The signature in the Petra Bank guarantee was that of Mr. Khoury, who was also reportedly involved in related negotiations. The defence, through cross-examination Dr. Waked on points involving the various aspects of banking practices, sought to make the point that junior-level officials represented only the executive side of operations and thus Mr. Khoury's involvement in the deal and his signature on the document.

"The defence effectively is trying to establish that Dr. Chalabi was running a one-man show but used his staff in their official capacity to execute his decisions," said a lawyer close to the case. "It is argued also that the defendants were not aware that the deals violated Jordanian banking regulations," he said.

"All evidence points out that only a handful of family members and close associates were actually privy to Dr. Chalabi's ventures, both on the local as well as foreign levels," added the lawyer, who requested anonymity.

Ten lawyers are representing the defendants in court and Dr. Naddah is leading the defence side. Dr. Chalabi and several other key defendants — who have fled the country — have not responded to court summons and they are not represented in court.

Interpol has been contacted in a bid to have the absconding defendants brought to Jordan for the trial, but officials say no progress has been made in this aspect.

Also brought out in court by Dr. Waked were cases where Petra Bank bought large quantities of gold in the local market and shipped the metal outside to raise funds in foreign currency to support the bank's clandestine activities abroad. The deals involved "millions of dollars," according to Dr. Waked. The gold sales were undertaken at a time when there was a massive shortage of foreign currency in the country and CBJ regulations banned the transfer of more than \$5,000 outside without official approval.

Dr. Waked also referred to his finding that the Chalabi management had actively encouraged and participated in speculating in foreign commodity and metal markets in violation of Jordanian banking regulations.

Several financial institutions, including closed-down exchange houses — some of them directly controlled by Dr. Chalabi — are also involved in the case.

Bush calls for extra effort to convene Cyprus talks

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — President George Bush Friday endorsed efforts by U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar to convene a high-level conference on the divided island of Cyprus this month.

Mr. Perez de Cuellar said Thursday that such a conference could still be held and called on all parties to redouble their efforts and cooperate with his representatives in completing preliminary work.

The United Nations has been trying for years to end the division of Cyprus, virtually partitioned since Turkish troops occupied the northern part of the island in 1974 after a short-lived coup in Nicosia engineered by the military junta then ruling Greece.

Mr. Bush gave impetus for a new bid to solve the problem during a trip to Turkey and Greece in July.

He announced on Aug. 2 that Greek Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis and Turkish President Turgut Ozal had agreed to attend a U.N.-sponsored meeting on Cyprus in September provided sufficient progress had been made in narrowing differences.

"These are times of momentous change and of great opportunity," said a statement from White House spokesman Roman Popaduk. "In this spirit, the secretary-general's announcement reflects the fact that all of the parties involved realise that a lasting settlement may be within their grasp."

Mr. Popaduk said U.S. offi-

cials remained in close contact with all the parties and is prepared to assist Mr. Perez de Cuellar "in whatever he sees fit to help ensure the success of this endeavour."

Sampson freed

Nicos Sampson, convicted leader of the abortive coup which led to the Turkish invasion and division of Cyprus, was released from prison on a legal technicality Friday.

Mr. Sampson, 55, was released from Nicosia's central prison as several hundred supporters and foes scuffled at the prison gates. There were no injuries, and the crowds dispersed after the intervention of police.

Mr. Sampson is considered a hero by many Greek Cypriots for his part in the armed resistance against British colonial rule which ended in 1960. Right-wingers applauded his efforts to unite the island with Greece.

Left-wing Greek Cypriots consider the former newspaper publisher a traitor, responsible for splitting Cyprus.

In 1976, Mr. Sampson was convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison for his role in a bloody coup which overthrew the late Archbishop Makarios in July 1974.

After three years in jail he was allowed to travel abroad for medical treatment. He stayed in exile for 11 years despite his assurance that he would return promptly.

Mr. Sampson returned to Cyprus in June 1990, and was put back in prison. At the time authorities said he would have to serve until at least 1994. His sentence had been shortened by partial pardons.

Aoun assails Syria despite French warning

PARIS (R) — Exiled Lebanese General Michel Aoun has made a new verbal attack against Syria despite French warnings to keep quiet while on French territory.

The daily newspaper Le Figaro Saturday quoted Gen. Aoun as saying Damascus tricked him into seeking refuge in the French embassy in Beirut when Syrian forces attacked his headquarters last October.

He said Syria carried out the attack because the United States and Israel "had washed their hands of me." But he said he was not alone "because I know the whole Lebanese people feels it is in exile with me."

Gen. Aoun, a Christian leader, led a rival government in a two-year fight against Syria's military presence in Lebanon but fled to the French embassy last Oct. 13 after Syrian planes bombed his presidential palace headquarters.

He arrived last week in France, where he was granted asylum on condition that he avoided political statements.

The government warned Gen. Aoun Friday to remain silent after he was quoted in an earlier interview as saying the Lebanese people would rise up within a year and eject Syrian troops.

Le Figaro quoted Gen. Aoun as saying: "Both the French ambassador to Lebanon and I were tricked (by Syria)... which demanded that the ceasefire I asked for (last October) be announced by me from the French embassy premises."

Gen. Aoun said once he was inside the embassy, Syrian artillery opened fire on the premises, forcing him to stay there and cutting him off from his forces, which were then crushed.

He said his goal remained a Lebanese state "above religious issues... and no longer just an oasis of tolerance in the region."

Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Bouze summed French Ambassador Daniel Husson this week to complain about Gen. Aoun's statements.

CONDOLENCES

Members of the Board of Directors and all members of the Jordanian Scandinavian Friendship Association present to Their Royal Highnesses Prince Raad Bin Zeid and to Princess Majda, the Honorary Presidents of the Association, their sincere condolences on the passing away of H.R.H. Prince Fakhr El Nisa Zeid.

H.R.H. PRINCESS FAKHR EL NISA ZEID

May the All Mighty bless her Soul.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

| JORDAN TELEVISION | |
|--|----------------------|
| Tel: 773111-19 | |
| PROGRAMME TWO | |
| 18:00 | Montage |
| 18:30 | Le Chevalier de Ciel |
| 19:00 | News in French |
| 19:15 | Stratagem |
| 19:30 | News in Hebrew |
| 20:00 | News in Arabic |
| 20:30 | The Simpsons |
| 20:55 | Spot Light |
| 21:10 | Documentary |
| 22:00 | News in English |
| 22:30 | Hunter |
| PRAYER TIMES | |
| 04:51 | Fajr |
| 06:10 | (Sunrise) Duha |
| 12:33 | Dhuhr |
| 16:07 | Asr |
| 18:57 | Maghreb |
| 20:16 | Isha |
| CHURCHES | |
| St. Mary of Nazareth Church Switcheil Tel. 810740 | |
| Assistance of God Church, Tel. 637285 | |
| St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590 | |
| Church of the Annunciation Tel. 67440 | |
| De la Salle Church Tel. 661757 | |
| Terra Nova Church Tel. 622366 | |
| Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541 | |
| Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 628540 | |
| Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331 | |
| Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 771331 | |
| Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751 | |
| Armenian International Church Tel. 683326 | |
| Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811255 | |
| The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Tel. 823824, 654932 | |
| Church of the Nazarene Tel. 675691 | |
| WEATHER | |
| Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology. | |
| It will be fair and winds will be northwesterly moderate, in Aqaba, which will be northerly moderate and sea calm. | |

| AMMAN | |
|---|---------------------|
| Min./Max. temp. | 14 / 26 |
| Aqaba | 20 / 33 |
| Desert | 15 / 32 |
| Jordan Valley | 22 / 34 |
| Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 26, Aqaba 32. Humidity readings: Amman 62 per cent, Aqaba 44 per cent. | |
| USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS | |
| NIGHT DUTY | |
| AMMAN: | |
| Dr. Zein Zaghoul | 638591 |
| Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayem | 620115 |
| Dr. Abdul Majid Al Shuer | 791405 |
| Dr. Youssef Sammour | 615648 |
| Farm pharmacy | 661912 |
| Perdones pharmacy | 773336 |
| Al Azzam pharmacy | 637055 |
| Nairowah pharmacy | 623672 |
| Al Salam pharmacy | 636730 |
| Yacoub pharmacy | 644945 |
| Shamsani pharmacy | 637660 |
| JERUSALEM: | |
| Dr. Mazen Abu Baker | (-) |
| Al Shura pharmacy | 273825 |
| Dr. Samir Lawzi | (-) |
| Khalid pharmacy | 985417 |
| EMERGENCIES | |
| Food Control Centre | 637111 |
| Civil Defence Department | 661111 |
| Civil Defence Emergency | 630341 |
| Rescue Police | 192, 621111, 637777 |
| Fire Brigade | 891228 |
| Blood Bank | 771211 |
| Highway Police | 843402 |
| Traffic Police | 856390 |
| Public Security Department | 630321 |
| Hotel Complaints | 605800 |
| Price Complaints | 661176 |
| Water and Sewerage | (-) |
| Complaints | 897461 |
| Amman Municipality | (-) |
| Complaints | 787111 |
| Telephone Information (directory assistance) | 121 |

| HOSPITALS | |
|------------------------------|------------|
| AMMAN: | |
| Hussein Medical Centre | 813813/32 |
| Khalid Maternity, J. Amn. | 644281/6 |
| Al Khayma Maternity, J. Amn. | 642441/2 |
| Jabal Amman Maternity | 642302 |
| Malles, J. Amman | 636140 |
| Palatine, Shamsani | 664171/4 |
| Shamsani Hospital | 669131 |
| University Hospital | 645845 |
| Al-Muhsin Hospital | 667227/9 |
| The Islamic, Abdali | 666127/37 |
| Al-Ahli, Abdali | 664164/6 |
| Isaiah, Al-Muhsin | 777101/3 |
| Al-Basheir, J. Amn. | 775111/26 |
| Army, Marfa | 874101/5 |
| Queen Alia Hospital | 622403/0 |
| Amal Hospital | 674135 |
| ZARQA: | |
| Zarqa Govt. Hospital | (09)983323 |
| Zarqa National Hospital | (0 |

RJ to open route to Canada, continues to upgrade operations

AMMAN (J.T.) — The national air carrier, Royal Jordanian (RJ), plans to open a route to Toronto, Canada, later this year and is conducting feasibility studies for reopening its routes to Athens, Berlin and Dacca, RJ Chief Executive Officer Husam Abu Ghazaleh announced Saturday.

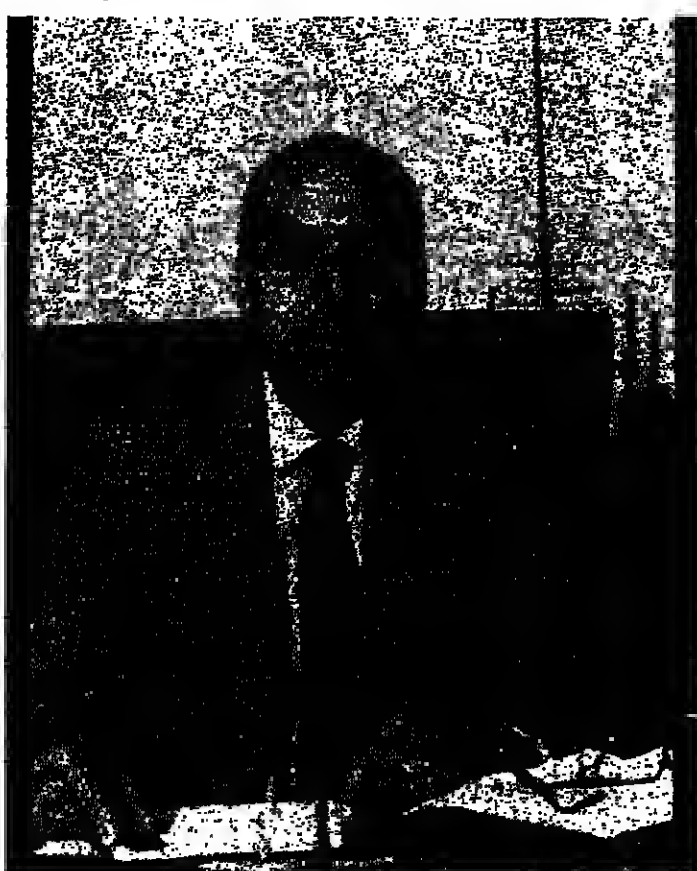
Operations by RJ, which sustained heavy losses as a result of the Gulf crisis, are now returning to normal and increasing in volume, Mr. Abu Ghazaleh said at the opening of an annual conference for heads of RJ offices in Southeast Asia and the Far East.

Describing this summer's operations as productive, Mr. Abu Ghazaleh said that the coming winter season was expected to witness a flurry of activity on the part of the national air carrier in the course of exporting Jordan's products to Europe.

Air freight accounts for 25 per cent of RJ's operations, which plans to export the Kingdom's fruits and vegetables to European markets in the coming agricultural season, Mr. Abu Ghazaleh said.

Mr. Abu Ghazaleh, who last May estimated RJ's losses as a result of the Gulf crisis at \$100 million, said that the airline's operations are gaining momentum. He cited the reopening earlier this year of the Amman-Colombo route as signs of improvement in the airline's world wide operations.

Referring to the prospect of transforming RJ into a public share holding company, Mr. Abu Ghazaleh said that the project is under consideration. But, he said major Jordanian organisations and the public will have the major



Husam Abu Ghazaleh

share of the projected company. In a statement earlier this week to Sawt Al Shaab daily, Mr. Abu Ghazaleh said that in implementation of Royal directives to transform the airline into a public company, RJ's management has been in contact with numerous world organisations and the negotiations have now reached advanced stages towards helping to achieve that goal.

RJ Vice President for Commercial Affairs Dr. Majdi Sabri said that the meeting was designed to discuss plans for RJ's operations in the coming winter and spring seasons.

In addition, he said, the meeting would review RJ's achievements in the first eight months of 1991 with particular attention to the Southeast Asian and Far Eastern routes.

PSD issues new timetable for bridges

AMMAN (Petra) — The Public Security Department (PSD) Saturday issued an updated timetable for the closure of the King Hussein and the Prince Mohammad Bridges across the Jordan River.

The PSD requested travellers to abide by the given dates and hours of travel in the timetable which will remain effective until the end of the month.

The statement said that as of today the two bridges will be opened only after noon. On Monday and Tuesday the bridges will remain closed. On Sept 17 they will open after noon. On Sept 18 the bridges will remain closed. On Sept 22 the bridges open after noon. On Sept 23 they remain closed. On Sept 29 the two bridges open after noon and on Sept 30, both will remain closed.

Israel to close Prince Mohammad Bridge to passenger traffic

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — An Israeli decision to close one of the two bridges linking the two banks of the Jordan River for passenger traffic has raised concern in Jordan that the move will lead to increased difficulties for residents of the occupied West Bank to travel to and from the Kingdom.

The Israeli decision to allow only vehicle traffic through the Prince Mohammad Bridge (formerly known as Damia Bridge) — mostly trucks carrying Palestinian produce to Jordan — and divert all passenger traffic to the King Hussein Bridge (formerly the Allenby Bridge) takes effect on Oct. 1.

Jordan has been informed of the decision through the U.N. Armistice Commission, which monitors the ceasefire lines between the two countries.

"Jordan will have to study the implications of the move," said a senior official who requested anonymity.

"Obviously, there is more to it than just procedures and facilities as the Israelis are obviously portraying it."

Another official said: "In effect, the Israeli move means increased difficulties for residents of the West Bank from the northern areas who were using the Prince Mohammad Bridge."

"Now they will have to travel to the King Hussein Bridge and travel northwards to reach towns like Nablus, Jenin and Tulakarem — some of the most populated areas in the West Bank," he said.

It was not immediately known whether the Israelis were also planning to divert vehicle traffic from the King Hussein Bridge to the Prince Mohammad Bridge.

"No doubt the Israelis are trying to add to the problems

faced by the Palestinians living in the occupied territories," said the official, who preferred anonymity. "There cannot be any other explanation."

A senior official at an international relief agency based in Amman said he was informed by the Israeli commander at the King Hussein Bridge last week that the occupation authorities were going ahead with the closure of the Prince Mohammad Bridge.

The Israeli assertion behind the decision is that the occupation authorities would be able to provide "better facilities" to travellers across the King Hussein Bridge. But sources familiar with the issue say it is obvious that the move is aimed at maintaining a closer security scrutiny of travellers since the security apparatus at the King Hussein Bridge is better equipped for inspection by the Israelis.

At the same time, produce

exporters from the occupied territories think that the shift to the Prince Mohammad Bridge may not be without its advantages in that delay could be cut down for crossing the river if the Israelis were sincere.

"It is no secret that the Israeli soldiers at the crossings make it as difficult as possible for produce exporters," said resident of the Gaza Strip who was visiting Jordan.

Prolonged security checks and insistence on minute details of documentation result in delays at the bridge and exposes fresh produce to the sun.

"In many cases, half the produce is destroyed by the time the truck reaches the market in Amman," said the Gaza.

But, he added, "It is difficult to believe that the Israelis are genuinely concerned over the losses of Palestinian exporters."

Government urges residents of Jordan Valley to protect themselves from effect of spraying

AMMAN (J.T.) — A three-week campaign to rid the Jordan Valley region of insects and to protect the crops from pests is underway and an appeal went out to local residents to take extra precautions to protect themselves, their water and animals from any negative consequences from the wide-ranging operation.

The ministries of Agriculture, Interior and Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment, together with the Jordan Valley Farmers Association (JVFA), are participating in the campaign in

which special planes from the Royal Jordanian Air Force and ground equipment are being used in spraying insecticides.

The Ministry of Agriculture, in an appeal to local farmers and residents of the valley, urged them to find means of protecting their children and to stop their animals from grazing in areas being sprayed for 24 hours. It also asked residents to close their homes and hangars during the spraying hours.

Residents to seek the help of health centres should any sign of poisoning appear on humans.

Spraying of crops and residential areas will extend from north Shuneh to south Shuneh and Karameh.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, the cost of the campaign, which started Saturday, was expected to reach JD 150,000. It said that an area of nearly 100,000 dunams of land would be covered in the campaign.

Princess Wijdan Ali calls for end to 'cultural apartheid'

AMMAN (J.T.) — On Aug. 31, the World Arts Forum was officially launched in Davos, Switzerland by Professor Klaus Schwab, founder of the World Economic Forum.

Speaking at the official opening ceremony held in Venice, Princess Wijdan Ali, president of the Royal Society of Fine Arts in Jordan who emphasized the need to break the barriers of cultural apartheid.

She also emphasized the need for cultural diversity and coexistence in order to learn to live in an atmosphere of peace and mutual respect. Her Highness also called for continued horizontal and cultural exchange with the aim of promoting cooperation and open mindedness throughout humanity.

Also attending the official ceremony and addressing the forum were: Gianni de Michelis, foreign minister of Italy, Jack Lang, French Minister of Culture, Johnny Clegg, the well known rock star and anti-apartheid activist in South Africa, Quincy Jones, the jazz musician and well known human rights activist from the U.S.A. and Maestro Mezzel, the famous orchestra conductor.

Princess Wijdan was also chosen last year from among 120 international personalities as an ambassador at large for the arts. The ambassadors also include other well known personalities who have contributed to the building of cultural bridges throughout the world. Among them are Plácido Domingo, Peter Ustinov, Leonard Bernstein as well as the Agha Khan.

Iraqi Chamber Music Ensemble to perform

AMMAN (J.T.) — The National Music Conservatory, in cooperation with the Iraqi Department of Musical Arts, presents the Baghdad Chamber Ensemble in a concert at the Royal Cultural Center at 8 p.m. Tuesday.

The programme includes works by L. Van Beethoven, G.F. Handel, Mendelssohn, Tchaikovsky, Batsini, Dineko and Agnes Bashir.

The Baghdad Chamber Ensemble was established in 1987 and has given more than 40 concerts in the Iraqi capital. It played at the Third Babylon International Festival. Its repertoire includes about 150 compositions covering a wide period in the history of Western music, ranging from baroque to the 20th century.

The ensemble includes: Agnes Bashir (piano): obtained her master's degree in piano and composition from the USSR. Among her compositions are: Iraq Symphony, Sinbad Ballet Suite, Ashtar Ballet Suite, Bayarag Symphony, and Ashtar Symphony Poem in addition to songs for children and compositions for violin and piano.

Latif Abdul Ghami (oboe): obtained his master's degree in oboe from the USSR besides a diploma from the Iraqi School of

Music and Ballet. He is the assistant conductor and oboist of the Iraqi Symphony Orchestra.

Aram Zarzian (violin): obtained his master's degree as a solo violinist from the USSR and won international competitions in Russia and Italy in 1986 and 1989 respectively.

Mohammad Ali Abhas (violin and viola): obtained his diploma in violin from the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad. He is a member of the Iraqi Symphony Orchestra.

Samir Mohammad Jawad (violin): obtained his diploma in violin from the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad. He is a member of the Iraqi Symphony Orchestra.

Al-Hussein Muna (cello): obtained his diploma in cello from the School of Music and Ballet in Baghdad and continued his studies in the USSR. He is a member of the Iraqi Symphony Orchestra.

Fikri Bashir (manager): obtained his master's degree in violin from the USSR, besides two diplomas from the Institute of Fine Arts in Baghdad. He is the artistic director of the Iraqi School of Music and Ballet.

Ala' Fikri (violin) guest, a distinguished student from the School of Music and Ballet.

Conference on increasing red meat production in Arab World opens

AMMAN (Petra) — Delegates from nine Arab countries began a five-day meeting Saturday at the University of Jordan to discuss modern techniques in increasing the production of red meat for the Arab World.

The Arab World's livestock wealth accounts for only 8 per cent of the total livestock in the world and the meat productivity level of Arab states is estimated at less than half of the accepted world's standard placing the Arab countries among the backward nations in this regard, Agriculture Minister Subhi Al-Qasem said in an address at the opening session.

The Arab World can increase its red meat production but most Arab countries are faced with lack of modern techniques to do that, the minister said.

He added that artificial insemination and the introduction of other biological techniques can help boost meat production and help Arabs ensure food security with sufficient amount of animal protein.

Dr. Fawwaz Al Karmi, secretary general of the Baghdad-based

Higher Council for Science and Technology, said that depending on local resources would enhance the Arab countries' independence.

Relying on foreign sources can only weaken the Arab economy and perpetuate the drain of Arab funds, Dr. Karmi said.

According to Dr. Walid Abu Gharbieh, dean of the University of Jordan's faculty of agriculture, the year 2000 will witness a severe shortage of red meat production.

At the current rate of meat production, the Arab World is bound to face a shortage of 2.5 million tonnes of red meat and 5.5 million tonnes of dairy products by the end of the present century, Dr. Abu Gharbieh said.

Dr. Abu Gharbieh said that Jordan can boost its meat production to reach 40 per cent of the total annual needs by following modern techniques and by boosting its animal feed production.

A total of 13 working papers are expected to be reviewed by the participants from Jordan, Iraq, Sudan, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Egypt, Yemen and Ireland.

Local firm awarded JD 42,000 contract to build dam

AMMAN (J.T.) — A local consultancy services office has won a JD 42,000 contract from the Ministry of Agriculture to supervise the construction of a dam at Rweished near the Iraqi border.

The estimated JD 600,000 project will be carried out in the Hammad Basin, which is being developed by the government to settle eastern desert tribes and boost agricultural production.

A local construction firm had won the contract and, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, work on the construction of the dam was expected to begin this month. The dam, one of several being set up in desert regions to collect rain water, will have a 10 million cubic metre capacity and will be finished before the end of the year.

According to the ministry, the dam will largely benefit the sheep and stock breeders, offering them water for their sheep and cattle and helping to expand the pasture areas in the eastern parts of the country.

Minister of Agriculture Subhi Al-Qasem signed the contract with the manager of the consultancy office in Amman. The Ministries of Water and Irrigation and Agriculture are currently



Subhi Al-Qasem

joining hands to build Wadi Rajel Dam in Azraq, which will have a 3.5 million cubic metre capacity. A statement said that the work will soon start on this new dam.

Dr. Kamel Radsideh, head of the Water Harvesting programme at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation said that a total of nine earth dams in the desert regions have been set up to collect rain water. These are Sama Al-Sarhanb, Ghadir, Al-Khalidich, Burqa, Abu Suwan Dam, Mwaqar, Qatraneh and Sultani.

According to Dr. Radsideh, designs have been prepared for the Swaqa and Wadi Jordan Dams in the Qatraneh and Maan regions but work can not start pending the availability of funds.

UNESCO Prepares to celebrate International Literacy Day

By Maha Adnani

Special to the Jordan Times
AMMAN — The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) will celebrate International Literacy Day Sunday, according to officials at the UNESCO office in Amman.

The celebration includes the showing of movies stressing the importance of literacy as well as the distribution of five prizes for literacy ranging in value between \$10,000 and \$35,000. The winners will be decided by a panel of judges.

"This annual event is very important because it raises public awareness of the problem of illiteracy," said Hashem Abu-Zeid, a consultant for literacy and adult education at UNESCO's Amman office.

"There are two messages behind this international celebration set up by UNESCO. The first is that education and literacy are essential to the present and future well-being of society and the second is that literacy and education are the responsibility of all sectors of society."

UNESCO's latest statistics show that there are 950 million adult illiterates in the world and another 100 million children between the ages of 5 and 11 who do not attend school.

the UNESCO statistics show that, compared with other Arab countries where illiteracy rates exceed 71 per cent, Jordan is in "good shape."

"Jordan is ranked sixth in a group of 19 Arab countries for which recent statistics for literacy rates have been made," Mr. Abu-Zeid said. "There are 1,365,000 Jordanians between the ages of 15 and 45, of which about 334,800 were illiterate as shown by statistics taken in 1989. The latest UNESCO statistics for Jordan, of Jordanians who are 15 years or older and taken in 1990, show that the illiteracy rate, dropped from being over 23 per cent in 1989 to 19.9 per cent."

He attributed the decrease in illiteracy to an increase in the number of facilities for adult education and a rise in the number of adults who attend these schools.

"Over 9,000 adults are enrolled in adult education classes, which is a definite step forward," Mr. Abu-Zeid said.

He added that Jordan is also ahead of many other countries in that there are no children who are six years old not enrolled in schools.

"Not only are children of primary school age all enrolled in schools, but also there is a great deal being done to enroll street children who are usually above 10 years old in schools."

Mr. Abu-Zeid said.

On an international level, studies by UNESCO show that the two international goals of basic education for all and eradication of illiteracy by the year 2000 remain unattainable because of the large number of children not attending schools in developing countries.

Reports by UNESCO show that in some countries there is a noticeable increase in enrollment in schools mainly because of an increase in birthrates in those countries. The report also states that in order for the percentage of illiteracy not to increase further in those countries it would be necessary for enrollment in schools to double between 1988 and the year 2000.

According to a report by John W. Ryan, a coordinator of the International Literacy Year (ILY) at the Secretariat in Paris, there are main lessons to be learned. He writes that we know that a literate world can be achieved because we know what has to be done. Ensuring that every child in the world gets a turn in school is a vital part of it.

Also, it is necessary to continue to focus the attention of governments and the public on educational issues. Ideas matter. What is considered to be important receives attention and progress follows.

21,506 returnees arrived in Jordan during August, survey reveals only 23 per cent own land in Kingdom

AMMAN (J.T.) — A total of 21,506 Jordanian and Palestinian expatriates returned to the Kingdom from Kuwait between Aug. 6 and Sept. 6 of this year and the government-appointed committee for the welfare of returnees is doing all it can to offer them help, according to Interior Ministry Secretary General and Committee Chairman Salameh Hammad.

The committee is implementing a short-term plan by which it is offering urgent assistance to the needy expatriates in the form of food and medical supplies and medical treatment, Mr. Hammad said in a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra. Mr. Hammad said that the committee has embarked on a long-term strategy aimed at utilizing the expatriates' expertise and skill in initiating income-generating projects in the Kingdom.

At the same time, the committee is maintaining contact with international organisations, and non-governmental groups to help the Kingdom implement the strategy, which was drawn up in conjunction with these organisations Mr. Hammad said. He added that the committee hopes that these organisations and U.N. agencies will come to the help of Jordan and donor countries will assist Jordan in coping with the



Salameh Hammad

additional burdens of providing humanitarian services to the returnees.

Last month, the United Nations resident representative in Jordan, Dr. Ali Attiga, announced that various organisations operating in the Kingdom have responded to a call to provide assistance and to help the country carry out the long-term strategy.

Close to 300,000 Jordanian and Palestinian expatriates have returned to the Kingdom in the past few months after being evicted by the Kuwaiti authorities. Mr. Hammad said that he had held a series of meetings with heads of charitable and humanitarian organisations operating in Jordan and was maintaining contacts with them to ensure sufficient

help to the expatriates.

Meanwhile, a bulletin issued by the Department of Statistics in Amman has revealed that only 23 per cent of returning expatriates own land on which they can build homes.

Also, 26.5 per cent of returnees own homes in Jordan and that 2.3 per cent hold capital and intend to start a business of their own, according to the bulletin.

The bulletin is based on information obtained from those returning to the Kingdom between Aug. 10 and Aug. 31 during which 15,032 expatriates crossed into Jordan.

The bulletin showed that nearly half of the expatriates returning during that period came back via the border post of Rweished, that 6,749 of them were under 15 years of age and that most of the returning families had spent at least 10 years working and living in Kuwait.

The bulletin also showed that half of the expatriates did not acquire a full secondary school education and that 40 per cent of them had worked in technical fields.

According to the statistical bulletin, 26 per cent of the families had been physically tortured and 847 families of them sustained heavy financial losses as a result of the expulsion order.

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A real tug-of-war of a battle of wits

ISRAELI Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir has deliberately and arrogantly rebuffed both U.S. President George Bush and his Secretary of State James Baker over the issue of the \$10 billion loan guarantee that Israel seeks to finance its programme to resettle new Jewish emigrants. By first scornfully turning down Mr. Baker's appeal not to submit its loan request for the time being for genuine fear that such an Israeli move may derail the U.S.-brokered peace process and then by defiantly brushing aside Mr. Bush's own call on the U.S. Congress to postpone consideration of the Israeli application, Shamir appears to be seeking a showdown with the Bush administration.

The ensuing tug-of-war between Washington and Tel Aviv over this loan issue is bound to negatively affect the peace process and suspend the countdown for launching the much-worked-for peace talks in October between the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Judging by the way Tel Aviv has chosen to go over the heads of Mr. Bush and Mr. Baker, there is little doubt that its objectives surpass the loan guarantee objective and aim at something more sinister.

Having put his credibility right on the line there is no way that the president can back off now from his publicly announced position that peace in the Middle East must be given a chance and therefore Congress should delay consideration of the Israeli request for four months. Obviously Mr. Shamir knew in advance that by going over the head of President Bush to the U.S. Congress, a dangerous standoff is being created between the Bush administration and the Shamir government. From the prime minister's point of view this appeared to be a no-loss situation. If Mr. Bush succeeds as expected in persuading the Congress to yield to his appeal, then the Israeli government may exploit such a tactical defeat in order to achieve a strategic victory that would find expression in its rejection of the projected October peace parity.

There is no doubt that Tel Aviv is now busy sending out to Washington one threat after another to the effect that if its standoff with the Bush administration is not settled in its favour, it will abandon the October peace conference. In so doing, the Israeli government will try to prove that Mr. Bush has succeeded in attaining exactly the opposite of what he sought. If the U.S. president succumbs to Israeli pressures and innuendoes by accepting some kind of a compromise formula that is to the liking of Israeli leaders, then he risks appearing as having buckled under the pressure of a small tiny country at a time when he is riding high on his victories in the Gulf and the Soviet Union. This is not to mention the negative side effects that would have on the Arab side and on their carefully cultivated approval of the October peace talks.

Yet President Bush has now a chance of a lifetime to reign in Israel once and for all by standing firm in his quest for a 1991 peace conference and in his appeal that the loan request be put off for few months. If Congress can show statesmanship and high national and international responsibility by respecting the call of their president, the Shamir government would be served with a clear enough notice that he may not bank so easily on the defeat of Mr. Bush by the Congress on this subject, especially when the president has hinted that he may go directly to the American people if necessary over this issue.

There is a great danger for Israel if it still seeks to discredit the U.S. chief executive. Tel Aviv stands to risk all, including its favourite place in the American society, by overplaying its hand and dangerously exposing the disproportionate pressures that Jewish lobbies exercise in the U.S.

But this is not all. Washington has yet to play the Moscow card on which Israel depends for receiving the millions of new emigrants that it seeks to service with the requested \$10 billion loan. Soviet leaders Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin owe the Bush administration a great deal and they would probably like nothing more than to play ball with it on this score.

So on all counts, Mr. Shamir's government will emerge a loser if President Bush stands firm on this and related points. Then the American people as well as the international community would realise just who can call the shots in the American-Israeli relationship.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AS the talk nowadays focuses on prospects for Middle East peace, the world hears Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir giving statements boasting of his past terrorist actions in Palestine under the British mandate, said Al Ra'i daily Saturday. Mr. Shamir has been giving his own version about the acts of terrorism committed by his terrorist group not only against the British but also against the Arab population of Palestine, justifying such actions as rightful because they helped the Jews establish their own state, the paper noted. Mr. Shamir is describing terrorism as a lawful action but is denying Arab People's right to resist, the Palestinians' rights, now struggling for freedom, the paper said. By boasting of his actions in the past and applying all forms of repression against the Palestinians at present, Mr. Shamir is thus reiterating his adamant position and refusing to consider any peace with the Arabs, the paper warned. It said that Mr. Shamir's statement, coming on the eve of a fresh tour of the Middle East by U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and as the time draws near for the U.S.-sponsored peace conference, can only mean that the Israeli leader will abort any peace bids regardless of their source. The paper said that while the United States has been condemning the PLO's actions in the course of the struggle for freedom, it has been condoning Israel's acts of terrorism and repression. It goes without saying that Washington is thus practising a double standard policy not only with regard to the peace process but also in dealing with what it believes as acts of terrorism.

A political option that meshes Islam with modern values

By Tom Porteous

ALGIERS, Algeria — Sheikh Mahfud Nahnah likes to describe his politics as modern and democratic, and he sees no contradiction between this and the ambition of his political party, Hamas, to establish an Islamic state in Algeria. Sheikh Nahnah and his supporters emphasise that Islam is both modern and democratic. It is also, they say, the best solution to Algeria's profound economic and political crisis.

"What we in Hamas are calling for is 'Shura', says Sheikh Nahnah, developing Hamas' political synthesis of democracy with one of the main principles of Islamic political theory, rule by Shura of consultation. The democratic models may mostly be Western, but this does not mean that Algeria, in turning towards democracy, should repudiate its Islamic political traditions, according to Sheikh Nahnah. The synthesis of the two is not only possible, but it is the best way to preserve Algeria from a return to dictatorship.

To raise the prospect of another one-party rule is to call on Algerians' worst fears. After three decades under the rule of the socialist party government established immediately after independence, Algerians are now enjoying unprecedented political freedom. Following the evident failure — social and economic — of the old system and the violent riots which drew attention to that failure in October 1988, the regime was left with little choice but to throw the political debate to the people, to introduce genuine democracy and to set a date for the country's first free election.

But three years later the country's democratic future is far from certain or secure. The growing popularity of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which won a

majority of local governments in municipal elections in mid-1990, has led many Algerians to read in the FIS's anti-democratic slogans signs that Algeria may become an Islamic dictatorship. Others simply fear that in reaction to the FIS the regime may have second thoughts and reimpose totalitarian rule with the support of the army.

The latest troubles last June, when anti-government protests led to the intervention of the army, a violent crackdown on the FIS and the postponement of general elections, have left many Algerians confused as to which of the FIS and the regime represents the greatest danger or hope. A devout Muslim opposed both to FIS and to the regime, Sheikh Nahnah founded Hamas in December 1990 in an effort to break what he sees as the FIS' monopoly of the Islamic opposition and the dangerous bipolarisation of Algerian politics. There were already many other opposition parties, but none with an overtly religious programme.

Hamas criticises the FIS on its own ground: religion. It does not object to the FIS' final objective, the creation of an Islamic state, but it rejects the FIS idea of what an Islamic state should look like and how it should be achieved. Sheikh Nahnah accepts the fact that the FIS has brought the message of Islam to hundreds of thousands of young Algerians, but he complains that the FIS is giving them a false picture of Islam, of Islamic values and of the nature of the political struggle recommended by Islam. Above all, Sheikh Nahnah and his supporters, many of them university graduates, say they are disturbed by the FIS' anti-democratic slogans, its intolerance of others' views and its apparent ambition to establish an Islamic state by any means — even by armed

insurrection if necessary.

At the national headquarters of Hamas in the Muradiya district of Algiers, Sheikh Nahnah, immaculately dressed in a snow white shirt buttoned up to the collar, enthusiastically presents his tolerant, caring version of Islamic politics — a far cry from the fiery, confrontational demagoguery for which the FIS is known. Punctuating each sentence with a broad grin from behind his well-kept grey beard, Sheikh Nahnah paints his vision of an Islamic democracy in Algeria, open to the world, respectful of human rights, prosperous, progressive and moderate — an Islamic state on the southern shores of the Mediterranean which no-one would have any reason to fear.

The political ideas of Hamas are not new, and Sheikh Nahnah acknowledges the influence of the great 19th and 20th century reformist Islamic thinkers and teachers — men like Mohammad Abdu, Abdul Hamid Ibn Badis and Hassan Al Banna, the founder of the influential Muslim Brotherhood. Just as these men sought in the colonial period to work out a way for Muslims to deal with the dominance of the West, so Sheikh Nahnah sees the relationship with the West as a central issue for Muslims today in the post-colonial era in the era of the New World Order.

As Hamas sees it, the task for Muslim countries like Algeria is to learn and profit from the culture and science of the West, to take what is best and to adapt it to the needs and beliefs of Muslims. Sheikh Nahnah — smiling and lifting his eyebrows at the thought — says that after all it was upon the scientific and cultural achievements of Islam and the Arabs that the European Renaissance was based. Why should not the Muslim world undertake its own renaissance now on the

basis of Europe's achievements? The most important condition for such an Islamic renaissance, says Sheikh Nahnah, is a multi-party system based on democratic principles and respect for human rights.

According to Sheikh Nahnah, the West too can learn from what Islam has to offer. Europe, he says, has reached a stage of material saturation and is looking for "something to fill people's hearts and clean their spirits." Eventually, Hamas looks forward to a kind of marriage between the scientific mentality of the West and the spirituality of Islam.

Sheikh Nahnah traces his personal commitment to Islam back to his traditional Muslim and Arabic education during the last years of the French occupation. Unlike many Algerian intellectuals of his generation, particularly those better known in the West, Sheikh Nahnah avoided a Francophone education and today refuses to speak French though he appears to understand it well. Now approaching 50, he attended university in the 1960s and later taught at the university in Algiers in the 1970s. At that time, the socialist leader Houari Boumedienne was at the height of his power, the country was embarked on a frenzied programme of industrial construction, and Marxism dominated Sheikh Nahnah's political curriculum at the university. In his lectures, he says he tried to criticise Marxist thought not only from an Islamic point of view but also from a practical one: it was already clear to him that the Marxist system was failing wherever it was applied.

But for Sheikh Nahnah, Algeria's crisis should not bring the immediate application of the Western free-market system. Hamas supporters, like their leader, are quick to point out the

weaknesses of this model: the social breakdown manifested by homelessness, drug abuse, prostitution, divorce and crime. With the implementation of Sharia, Islamic Law, God's power is at hand to protect man and society from such ills, they say. Sheikh Nahnah vigorously defends Sharia against the Western view that in permitting such punishments as amputation for stealing, it is cruel and primitive, and that in allowing polygamy and encouraging women to wear the veil it is patriarchal and misogynist. Unlike many supporters of the FIS, Hamas advocates a gradual implementation of Sharia, and believes that in order to create a well-balanced Islamic society, Sharia should be open to discussion and interpretation instead of being a blind application of certain words and sentences taken from Holy Texts out of their proper context.

"Islamic Sharia," says Sheikh Nahnah with twinkling eyes, "is tolerant and demands liberty, knowledge and work." Sharia can be adapted in an enlightened manner to the complexities of modern life — different as these are from the conditions for which Sharia was first developed in 7th and 8th-century Arabia.

One area where Sheikh Nahnah sees flexibility as especially important is in Algeria's financial relations with the West. According to Sharia, the practice of taking or paying interest on debts is proscribed. But in the world of international finance it is inevitable. Algeria itself is in debt to the tune of \$25 billion and some 70 per cent of the country's income from oil and gas exports goes to service payments on this debt. Failure to meet its debt obligations would mean international isolation and economic disaster. But there is considerable resentment in Algeria — particularly since the Gulf war — at an

international economic order in which the luxuries enjoyed by rich nations are effectively subsidised by the miseries of the poor countries.

"We are not on an island isolated from the world," says Sheikh Nahnah. "Islam itself demands that we give and take with the peoples of this world, and of these some are weak and others are strong. At present the strong are the Europeans with their universities and technology and banks. We feel we are weak."

For the situation to improve, Sheikh Nahnah advocates realism: on the one hand Algeria should meet its debt obligations as fast as it is able, but on the other hand it should seek to persuade the West to reassess its economic policies towards countries like Algeria. He points out that the permanent decline of the economies of the Maghreb region cannot be in the long-term interest of its neighbours on the north shores of the Mediterranean.

So far Hamas' moderate message has proved less of a crowd puller than the more militant and simplistic slogans of the FIS whose calls to protest demonstrations brought thousands onto the streets until the violent clampdown in June left many dead and the FIS leaders in prison. FIS supporters regard Hamas at best as elitist and at worst as heretical, and there have been reports of violent clashes between the militants of the two parties. But Hamas believes that Algerians have been put off by the poverty of the FIS' ideas and by the apparent violence of their methods. For such people, Hamas and its genial leader offer the thinking man's Islamic alternative — they just have to wait for the democratic process to resume in order to take it — World News Link.

Soviet experts put together economic jigsaw

By Brian Killeen
Reuters

MOSCOW — The Soviet Union's complex economic jigsaw, falling apart as republics shatter the power of the centre, is being glued together quickly but differently.

Russian Prime Minister Ivan Silayev, in charge of the economy since last month's failed coup, warned on Thursday there was no time to waste in moving "from the economics of the absurd to the economics of common sense."

The challenge of burying the command-administrative system while keeping links between republics — some of which want to create their own currencies and market-oriented reform programmes — has been taken up by the country's best-known economic brains.

Grigory Yavlinsky, co-author of the "500-day" and "grand bargain" plans for introducing a market economy, and his fellow radical Stanislav Shatalin are working on separate blueprints.

Mr. Yavlinsky, with official backing, is drafting an economic agreement that will allow the newly-independent republics to determine their policies without isolating themselves from a system that still provides much of their economic lifeblood.

Mr. Shatalin's influential private think-tank has a more ambitious project for creating an "economic community," embracing the republics and parts of central Europe.

Meanwhile, the task of day-to-day financial management will belong to an inter-republican economic committee until the shape of the new voluntary union is decided.

Mr. Silayev is ready to hand over the reins of the economy to the new inter-republican committee. He told the former Communist Party daily Pravda the republics were prepared to cooperate to avoid a collapse in trading links.

"And why exclude the possibility of Bulgaria, Poland and Czechoslovakia joining our economic community," he asked. Hungary, another country mentioned in the community proposal, has given a cool response to the idea.

"When we are talking about prices of mutual deliveries, about a future clearing system, we always find a common language," Mr. Silayev said.

The question of separate currencies, planned by the Baltic republics, the Ukraine and others, has split Soviet economists.

Some see it as a recipe for disaster, with trade suffering as non-convertible currencies mushroom, while imports of essential goods are priced either in hard currency or roubles.

But Mr. Yavlinsky, whizz kid of Soviet economics, and the veteran Shatalin say their respective plans allow republics to be independent with their own currencies.

Nikolai Petrakov, former economic adviser to President Mikhail Gorbachev and a supporter of economic union, said it was unrealistic for republics to isolate themselves.

"All republics here are inter-

linked. Production in general (with the exception of raw materials) is not capable of competing on the world market," he told the trade union daily Trud.

"Naturally, introduction, for example, of individual republican currencies is a step backwards... we have to preserve some sort of common economic space," he said.

"It would be less costly and more effective if all republics stuck with the rouble, but of course taking energetic steps to strengthen it."

Most economists agree on the other basic steps for a market economy, such as speedy price liberalisation and privatisation.

LETTERS

Give Gorbachev time

To the Editor:

WHY DO the people of the Soviet Union want to get rid of their saviour? The one man who saved them just two weeks ago from the coup-makers?

Of course, the Soviets are quite right when they say that Mikhail Gorbachev has not done much on the home front, but at least he gave them what has been the most important thing since man has existed — freedom! The freedom which the blacks of South Africa are fighting for, the freedom the Palestinians have been fighting for since 1948.

In the six years of his rule, Mr. Gorbachev has given them the most valued thing in the universe, freedom. With the freedom they also got the courage to stand up and say no to the coup-makers (who most probably would have turned the mighty Soviet Union into a big concentration camp).

Before: How many Soviets had the courage to stand up against authorities? If Mr. Gorbachev could give you your freedom in six years' time, just imagine what he will be able to give you in the coming six years!

In my opinion, the people of the Soviet Union owe Mr. Gorbachev a great deal and most of all they owe him time. Give him more time and I personally believe that you won't regret it.

Fady Shattin,
P.O. Box 2427,
Amman.

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.



Yugoslav, Soviet chaos offers years of instability

By Alison Smaile
The Associated Press

VIENNA, Austria — Europe, watching in Yugoslavia its first war since World War II, may use the diplomatic weapon of recognition to try to halt the carnage in Croatia.

Germany and to a lesser degree Austria, which is not a member of the European Community and does not want to endanger its current bid to join the EC, have threatened loudest to recognise Croatia and Slovenia, which declared independence June 25.

"I'd like to tell those responsible in the leadership of the Yugoslav People's Army: With every shot fired by your cannons and tanks, for us the hour of recognition is brought nearer," German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher said Wednesday. "We will not be able to watch this much longer."

Fierce fighting involving armed members of Croatia's 600,000-member Serb minority, Croatian security forces and the federal army has killed more than 300 people since June 25.

A cease-fire brokered by the 12-nation EC and signed Monday by all Yugoslav leaders only sparked a new push by the Serbs for strategic territories they vow not to relinquish in their determination never to be part of an independent Croatia.

The Croats, prevented by arms embargoes against Yugoslavia from getting many weapons abroad, increasingly count on international recognition to win independence.

But what if Croatia cannot defend itself? International law defines states as units which can control their borders and govern

their populations.

Slovenia seems likely to meet those conditions. It dealt the Yugoslav army several setbacks in fighting that killed at least 70 people in late June and early July. The Yugoslav army is now withdrawing, and ethnically homogenous Slovenia seems set to cast loose.

But Croatia, with its rebel Serbs, cannot hold its own. And recognition could push the Serbs and the Federal Army even closer together. They are united in their reluctance to see outside interference and suspicious of German intentions since World War II.

The spectre of a long war haunts all Europeans. They fear a tide of refugees, a European Lebanon that could be a source of terrorism, and an EC cut off from its southern member, Greece, by impassable Yugoslav territory.

The conflict could even spread to Serbia's southern province of Kosovo, where many of the 2 million Albanians desire union with neighbouring Albania.

In the battle for hearts and minds, the media are constantly involved. Croatia tries to court international media and Serbia uses its newspapers and TV to bolster support at home.

On Wednesday night, Germany's ZDF television channel broadcast terrifying footage of what it said were Croats mutilated in rebel Serbs in eastern Croatia. The pictures were later transmitted on Austria's state-run TV.

The rush to recognise the Baltic states has emboldened Croatia. But the cases are different. Unlike the Baltics forcible incorporation into the Soviet Union, Slovenia and Croatia were not forced into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918. The name was changed to

Yugoslavia in 1929.

European countries also are aware that if the EC recognises Croatia, northern Ireland, Italy's Alto Adige, or south Tyrol, and Spain's Basque country are only three areas where inhabitants might clamor for new states or border changes.

There are other dangers.

"My worry about recognising Croatia at this moment is that it would create a hope among some Croats that Europe was about to intervene militarily," British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said last week. "No one is actually proposing that."

Westerners seem at a loss about how to contain the forceful eastern nationalists that threaten to undo an old order that brought 46 years of stability for 46 years.

In Yugoslavia, as in the Soviet Union, fierce emotions have been unleashed. For decades, these undeveloped societies were ruled by a communist ideology that robbed everybody of individual and group identities, and sought to graft modernity on to peasant lives. Freed from repression, they want what they consider theirs.

Born by blood and land, they will use protests, blockades and if necessary guns to fight for their identity and their home.

Thus, while the EC prepared a peace conference to solve the Yugoslav crisis, Serbs and Croats fought on, proving Mr. Hurd correct when he cautioned: "If there is not a will for peace... there will not be peace."

"The European Community cannot tell us what we will do on our land," said Ilija Cesar, a Serbian guerrilla in Croatia. "If they send observers here, they could all be killed."

Congress seen agreeable

(Continued from page 1)

plan assistance to Israel to concessions in the peace process."

Mr. Mack added: "The U.S.-Israel relationship must not become a bargaining chip in the peace process. The alliance between the U.S. and Israel must not be held hostage to Arab states' demands against Israel."

But Mr. Baker said the administration was not trying to hold "a Club" over Israel's head or seeking a delay out of concern the Arabs might be opposed to the assistance.

"It's just that if this package is to move at this particular time I think that it would create conflict rather than avoid conflict," he said at a picture-taking session with Mr. Shoval outside his office.

"We don't want in any way to lose the best opportunity we've had for peace in a long time," Mr. Baker said.

He will go to the Middle East on Sept. 16 to try to steer Israel, Arab states and Palestinians into the peace talks.

Shamir hints at peace linkage

(Continued from page 1)

to the U.S. ambassador in Tel Aviv, William Brown, Saturday.

The Israeli official said Mr. Levy instructed Mr. Shoval to seek urgent consideration of the loan guarantee request, despite Mr. Bush's call for a delay.

Mr. Levy asked Mr. Shoval to tell Mr. Baker that "without the guarantee Israel would have no choice but to absorb fewer immigrants," the official said.

Mr. Shoval was also told to say Israel "may have difficulty absorbing those who have arrived," the official said.

Mr. Baker told Mr. Shoval the United States needed time to consider, the radio said.

Privately Israeli officials have expressed disappointment over Washington's hints of bowing to Arab demands to link immigration with peace negotiations.

Arab countries have repeatedly protested the Soviet influx to Israel, which significantly increases the population and pushed it over the five million mark this year.

Also at issue is Israel's persistent construction of Jewish settlements in

"What we are trying to do is to avoid a confrontation, to avoid a conflict, to avoid a debate that we would worry might be very divisive," Mr. Baker said.

He reiterated U.S. support for helping Israel resettle Soviet Jews, but did not specifically endorse the loan guarantees. Mr. Baker also said "The question of timing is one that I am quite certain we will be able to amicably work out."

After seeing Mr. Shoval, he called in leaders of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a prominent lobbying group, to make his case to them.

The committee's formidable machine was just rolling into action and will have to rethink its legislative strategy. Thousands of rabbis were expected to preach about Israel's need to get the money in Jewish new year services next Monday and Tuesday across the United States.

Officials said activists and political contributors had already started calling their senators and congressmen to express their views.

Israel leaders have repeatedly said the incoming Soviets would not be moved to the occupied territories, but have also insisted that settlement building would continue there unabated.

Prime Minister Shamir's ruling right-wing Likud bloc holds that the occupied territories are integral parts of Biblical Israel and controlling them is crucial to Israeli security.

Mr. Levy repeated this idea to fellow Likud members Thursday night.

He said Washington was "aware of the fact that in subjects related to Israeli security, Israel cannot relinquish its positions even if it has to live on bread and salt."

While the U.S. administration has denied the delay in housing loans is directly linked to proposed peace conference, Israelis could not help but draw a connection between the two issues.

"This is only the beginning," Hebrew University's Dr. Gabi Stoffer told Reuters Friday. "Bringing Israel to the peace conference is nothing compared to what it will take to make Israel compromise on the issue of (occupied) territories."

Iraq to spend oil proceeds on people

(Continued from page 1)

descriptions, including medicines to treat people suffering from cancer and diabetes.

Hospitals are admitting a growing number of children suffering from malnutrition. Outbreaks of cholera and other communicable diseases, such as typhoid, are rising sharply.

An Iraqi newspaper Saturday urged friendly Arab governments to defy the U.N. trade embargo against Iraq, even if that brought a military reaction.

"The people of Iraq are demanding a positive step that would demonstrate courage, daring, and the correct and noble Arab position to lift the evil economic blockade imposed on them," said an editorial in Al Qadisiya, the Iraqi Defence Ministry newspaper.

"Only a few ships or planes would be enough to challenge the tyranny of the United States and push it towards a deadly humanitarian dilemma if it tried any hostile action against this Arab step," said the editorial.

Arab silence on the continued economic sanctions "is a source of disgrace and casts doubts on

the truth of the 'sympathy' which certain Arab governments show towards Iraq," the newspaper said.

It said it was not referring to Arab states that joined the U.S.-led anti-Iraq coalition but to countries that professed to support Iraq.

The Iraqi government maintains that the sanctions and trade blockade should be lifted because its troops are no longer in Kuwait and it is complying with U.N. Security Council resolutions.

The United States and Britain say they will maintain the sanctions as long as President Saddam Hussein remains in power.

A United Nations chemical weapons inspection team wrapped up a week-long visit to Iraq Saturday expressing some doubts about what it had found and what Baghdad had declared.

Team leader Johan Santesson, a Swedish World Health Organisation official, held a protracted closed-door meeting with Iraqi officials after a final day of field inspections.

Mr. Santesson whose 26-member group will leave Sunday, declined to disclose before the meeting started exactly what points he would be raising.

France supports Palestinian right

(Continued from page 1)

should include ensuring Israel's security and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

Egypt's highest-ranking diplomat said Saturday he expects a Middle East peace conference to be held in Washington next month despite "last-minute difficulties."

Butros Ghali, deputy premier for foreign relations, said only the problem of who will represent the Palestinians remains to be overcome.

Dr. Ghali's optimism contrasted with a less-optimistic assessment in Washington by President George Bush Friday, who suggested the turmoil in the Soviet Union might force a postponement.

Dr. Ghali's "last-minute" characterization indicates he figures a key element has become just-surfaced differences between the United States and Israel about \$10 billion to housing loan guarantees sought by the Jewish state.

But asked specifically about the American-Israeli disagreement, Dr. Ghali refused to comment.

Dr. Ghali spoke of the Middle East situation at a Cairo news conference called mainly to promote his candidacy to become secretary-general of the United Nations.

He said the time has come for the organisation to have an African chief executive both for the sake of the continent's ego and for the U.N.'s image. The five secretaries-general since the United Nations was established in 1945 were from Europe, Asia and South America.

Dr. Ghali described as "a very personal interpretation" his forecast that the Middle East peace conference will convene next month as proposed by its co-sponsors the United States and the Soviet Union.

"I believe that the conference will be held in October despite last-minute difficulties," said Dr. Ghali, 68, a principal architect of the 1979 Egyptian-Israeli treaty.

"I have no basic information, but my personal impression is that it will be held in Washington," he added. "I believe that the American administration and Secretary (of State James) Baker will be able to overcome all the difficulties."

He said he is visiting Washington next week and will deliver a message to President Bush from President Hosni Mubarak dealing mainly with the Middle East peace effort.

Dr. Ghali said that last month's failed coup in the Soviet Union and subsequent changes in the structure of the Soviet State would not affect Moscow's role in the Middle East peace effort.

The Soviets "will participate in the conference and will play a very important role as co-chairman," he said.

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New U.S. envoy says ties with Yemen improving

WASHINGTON (USIA) — Arthur H. Hughes is looking forward to his service as the new U.S. ambassador to Yemen, attracted, he says, by the country's efforts at national unity and democratisation.

"There are exciting times for Yemen. It's a period of national reunification and transition. It is really remarkable what they are trying to achieve," Mr. Hughes said in an interview with USIA.

Mr. Hughes, a career foreign service officer, was sworn-in as the new ambassador at a State Department ceremony August 12.

He said he expects to arrive in Yemen sometime in September. A major focus for Mr. Hughes will be expressing U.S. support for Yemen's efforts at national unity, democratisation and economic liberalisation. He said he will work at "strengthening our relations" based on "frankness and clarity."

The ambassador will also work to "achieve an understanding in Yemen of U.S. interests in the region and the world and of the responsibilities the United States carries in virtually all corners of the world."

Asked how the United States can show support for Yemen's democratisation, the ambassador said the United States can "be responsive to requests for information, research work, analysis on experiences in this country

and elsewhere that may be in one way or another relevant to the situation."

He stressed that the United States will be responsive to the Yemenis' "requests and their needs as they see them."

Mr. Hughes noted that Yemen is more than half-way through a 30-month transition period, which began with national unity on May 22, 1990, and will end on Nov. 22, 1992. A constitutional referendum was recently held — which passed overwhelmingly — and elections will be held sometime before November 22, 1992, he said.

Efforts at democratisation have spawned an openness in Yemen demonstrated in "very intense and lively discussions and debates being held throughout the country on the exact nature of the political structures and working of the political system," Mr. Hughes said.

In addition, there has been a "literal explosion of information available" in Yemen, including the publication of journals, periodicals, newspapers and the televising of national debates, the ambassador noted.

These developments are "all very positive and encouraging" and reflect "the commitment of the political leadership of Yemen to all shades of persuasion to an open process where there is broad participation and a responsiveness of the government to the

will of the people," Mr. Hughes said.

Asked to comment on how the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait affected U.S.-Yemen relations, Mr. Hughes said that "the crisis brought about by Saddam Hussein's invasion and large-scale destruction of Kuwait unquestionably caused an interruption in a very positive flow in our relations with Yemen."

Yemen stated its opposition to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Mr. Hughes noted, but as a member of the U.N. Security Council, Yemen did not vote for the resolution authorising the use of all necessary means to enforce Security Council decisions on Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and ensure departure of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. He also pointed out that in recent Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, the United States and Yemen have for the most part stood together.

Despite the differences brought out by the crisis, U.S.-Yemen relations are underpinned by a strong U.S. support for the political and economic changes taking place in Yemen today, Mr. Hughes said.

"Essentially, even after the crisis and the different views on some of the issues, the United States obviously supports Yemeni independence and self-determination, national unity, and the objectives which the poli-

tical leadership have stated they are striving for — that is, democracy, political pluralism, and economic liberalisation," he said.

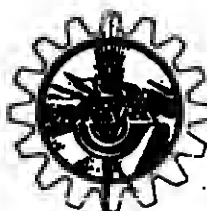
Yemen plays an important role in the Arabian peninsula and the Middle East, Mr. Hughes pointed out. Yemen could serve as a "source of stability" in the region due to its military and commercially strategic position and due to the fact that Yemen is the peninsula's most populous country, Mr. Hughes noted.

On the peace process, "Yemen, as an important country in the Arab and Islamic worlds, could certainly play a positive role by supporting constructive and moderate positions by both sides of the dispute," Mr. Hughes said.

By supporting these positions, Yemen could "contribute to an atmosphere which is conducive to negotiations and the spirit of compromise," he said.

Since he joined the foreign service in 1965, Mr. Hughes has served in Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. These assignments included: vice consul in Frankfurt, consul in Maracaibo, political officer in Bonn, and deputy chief of mission in Copenhagen, The Hague and Tel Aviv.

Before his assignment to Yemen, Mr. Hughes was deputy assistant secretary of defence for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs.



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Project No. 30-4857 (APC-25/90)

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A.P.C. has applied for financing to the World Bank. The proceeds of the loan will be applied to payments for the supply of the required equipment in accordance with the guidelines of the World Bank.

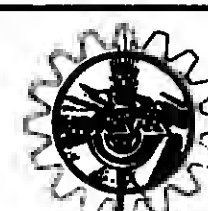
Purchases will be made from the member countries of the World Bank and Switzerland.

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| 1. Mr. Issa Gammoh, Projects Manager, The Arab Potash Co. Ltd., P.O. Box 1470 Amman — Jordan | 2. Mr. M. Hodgins, Jacobs International Inc., Merrion House, Merrion Road, Dublin 4, — Ireland |
| Fax No.: 962-3-377125/Site. Fax No.: 962-6-674416/Amman H.O. Telex No. 21683 Potash Jo. Tel No.: 666165/6 - Amman 665116 or 03-377121 - Site | Fax No.: 353-1-2695497 Telex No.: 30295 JCBS-El Tel No.: 353-1-2695666 |

NOTE: Closing date for submission of tenders has been extended from September 21st, 1991 to October 5th, 1991.

A.Y. Ensour,
Managing Director,
The Arab Potash Co., Ltd.,



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Submission of tenders should not be later than 12:00 noon 19th October, 1991.

A.Y. Ensour,
Managing Director,
The Arab Potash Co., Ltd.,

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Yugoslav peace talks start with little optimism

THE HAGUE (R) — European Community (EC) foreign ministers Saturday voiced little hope for a quick end to Yugoslavia's ethnic wars after the first round of a peace conference.

"Having heard some of the remarks made this morning, it is clear there will be considerable difficulties," former British Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington, chairman of the talks, told a news conference.

Dutch Foreign Minister Hans Van Den Broek, whose country holds the EC's rotating presidency, said: "It will be a thorny path without any doubt."

EC diplomats said speeches at the opening session by the presidents of Yugoslavia's feuding republics showed no signs that the gaps between their widely different views were narrowing.

"I don't see the end," Luxembourg's Foreign Minister Jacques Poos said. "We have started today without illusions."

The European Community warned Yugoslav leaders Saturday that peace talks here were the last chance for them to avert all-out civil war which would menace all of the Europe.

"We are gathered here to give reason a chance," said the Dutch foreign minister, opening the EC-mediated peace conference.

"Yugoslavia is in deep trouble. It is on the brink of full-scale civil war, if it hasn't already crossed that line."

"If this conflict is allowed to fester, it not only threatens the

security of the Balkan region, but that of Europe as a whole," Mr. Van Den Broek said.

Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers also expressed fears that the Yugoslav crisis could shake the stability of Europe.

"We cannot, at our own peril, stand by when the neighbouring house is on fire. We must help put out the fire or risk our own homes," Mr. Lubbers told the conference.

Thousands of Croatian and ethnic Albanian demonstrators, waving flags and banners protesting against the continued fighting in Croatia, thronged the streets of the Hague, clogging traffic as Yugoslav and EC ministers arrived for the conference in the Peace Palace, home of the International Court of Justice.

Police in the Hague estimated the number of demonstrators at between 7,000 and 10,000 and said many of them had been bused into the Netherlands from neighbouring Germany and Belgium.

The Albanians, three million of whom live in Yugoslavia, were protesting against their exclusion from the talks.

Fierce battles between Serbian guerrillas and forces of the breakaway Republic of Croatia continued Friday despite an EC-brokered ceasefire agreed Monday.

But reports from Belgrade said the conflict entered its first lull for several weeks early Saturday as the combatants awaited developments from the peace conference.

No clashes were reported during the night after at least 17 people were killed in eastern and central Croatia Friday. Dozens died in repeated truce violations early in the week.

"If the conference wants to stand a chance of success, the fighting must stop. Talking and shooting do not go together," Mr. Van Den Broek told the meeting.

Participants in the conference include Yugoslav Federal President Stipe Mesic and other members of the collective presidency as well as the presidents of the six republics and foreign ministers of the 12 Community countries.

Mr. Van Den Broek's concern over the continued killing in Yugoslavia was echoed by some Yugoslav leaders.

"We must bring the violence to an end. In no case the Yugoslav crisis be resolved through war," Mr. Mesic told reporters as he arrived at the conference.

"Our absolute priority now is to stop the bloodshed," said Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Markovic.

The EC has staked its prestige on finding a common security policy to resolve the Yugoslav crisis.

But doubts over the success of the talks have grown since successive EC-brokered ceasefires have been blasted to shreds by battles between Croatian forces on the one side and Serbs and elements of the Serb-led federal army on the other.



Two women carry their remaining belongings past a destroyed building in the Croatian village of Petrinja following a Yugoslav army attack.

Americans oppose sending money to Soviets

NEW YORK (R) — A majority of Americans oppose increasing U.S. aid to the Soviet Union despite the fall of Soviet communism and the end of cold war antagonisms, according to a survey released Friday.

The survey, commissioned by Reuters and the mighty Business Report, also showed most Americans approve of President George Bush's handling of the economy.

The poll, conducted by the Gallup Organisation, surveyed 1,003 American adults by telephone during the week that began on Aug. 26.

It found only 31 per cent in favour of increasing aid to the Soviet Union, while 58 per cent were opposed and 11 per cent of those questioned did not answer or had no opinion.

BBC poll shows British Conservatives leading

LONDON (R) — A new opinion poll has reinforced evidence that British Prime Minister John Major's ruling Conservatives lead the opposition Labour Party in popularity.

The poll, for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) television's newsmagazine programme Friday, gave the Conservatives 41 per cent, a one-point lead over the opposition Labour Party. The centrist Liberal Democrats got 15 per cent.

Earlier Friday, Mr. Major declined to say if he might call a national election in November but officials have said he wants to attend European Community (EC) summit talks in the Netherlands in December.

An election must be held by July next year at the latest. The BBC poll was the third in a week giving the ruling party a lead over Labour, reversing a

series of surveys which had the Conservatives trailing the opposition badly.

The Conservatives had not led Labour in the monthly BBC poll since May.

A poll in Friday's Daily Telegraph newspaper gave the Conservatives a 4.5 per cent lead over Labour and a survey last weekend had them two points ahead.

A surprise cut in interest rates to 10.5 per cent Wednesday — down from 15 per cent a year ago — led to speculation that an election this year was possible.

But Mr. Major, known as a cautious politician, is likely to take note of the narrow one-point lead in the BBC poll.

Inflation has fallen lately but the number of jobless workers is rising towards three million or 10 per cent of the workforce, economists say.

Thousands of Azerbaijanis protest against elections

BAKU, Soviet Union (R) — Tens of thousands of demonstrators protested in Soviet Azerbaijan to support nationalist opposition demands for cancellation of Sunday's presidential elections.

"Tell your family and friends not to vote in Sunday's undemocratic elections," Issa Kamberov of the Azerbaijan Popular Front's ruling committee told the protesters, who were waving Azeri national flags.

Popular Front leaders estimated the crowd at 50,000. The republic's president, Ayaz Mutalibov, a former member of the Soviet Communist Party politburo who opposition parties accuse of backing the failed Soviet coup, is the only candidate in the presidential election in the southern Soviet republic.

Mr. Mutalibov's rival, the leader of the Republican Social Democratic Party, Zardusht Ali-Zade, withdrew his candidacy,

saying he felt the election should be postponed.

The Popular Front, the most powerful opposition party, is boycotting the elections.

Mr. Kamberov asked the crowd to continue the protest Saturday. It was staged in front of a government building where Baku residents last week destroyed a statue of Lenin.

After an attack by the police during a meeting at the Popular Front headquarters two weeks ago, the security forces have not intervened in the opposition's activities despite several large demonstrations.

Another big protest was held in Baku Monday to call for the removal of Mr. Mutalibov and the cancellation of the presidential elections.

Leaders of the Popular Front say opposition parties do not recognise the parliament's declaration of independence.

Knives out for Kaifu as LDP barons start leadership battle

TOKYO (R) — Japan's powerful ruling party barons have kicked off what promises to be a bruising leadership battle with a series of attacks on Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu's lack of political weight and experience.

With the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) due to choose a new president next month — a job that brings with it the premiership — key players called this weekend for Mr. Kaifu to make way for a more able political heavyweight to speak authoritatively for Japan.

Announcing his decision to challenge the premier, a surprise choice for the post in 1989 after leading candidates were sidelined by scandal, Kiichi Miyazawa confined himself Friday to underlining his own wide experience as a former minister of trade, finance and foreign affairs.

Other possible contenders and power brokers were less diplomatic, directly attacking Mr. Kaifu's administration as stopgap and unable to make decisions.

Michiyo Watanabe, another likely candidate who has served at various times as agriculture, trade and finance minister, likened Kaifu to a relief pitcher in baseball, coming in for an inning or two to save the team from further losses.

"The cabinet has to be real," Kyodo News Service quoted him as telling supporters Saturday. "After (Kaifu's) term ends, able men should take the mound and form a cabinet with men of

ability or else it cannot operate in international society," he said.

The same baseball analogy figured in a speech in Washington Friday by former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, who severely criticised a political structure that allowed "rookies" (beginners) to take the helm of government as "relief pitchers" at a time of international crisis.

According to Kyodo, Mr. Nakasone said the high-level scandals of recent years had brought a quick turnover of prime ministers and a paralysis in leadership.

The man who in five years as premier used the post to project Japanese influence in a way unprecedented since World War II, told his American audience the Japanese government must rectify its slowness in making decisions and its lack of clarity in implementing policies as "singled out by U.S. experts for some time."

The root cause of this weakness lay with the way the LDP chose its leader," Mr. Nakasone said.

He said a premier should have majority control within the LDP, a barely disguised jibe at Mr. Kaifu who is a rank-and-file member of the party's fifth and smallest faction.

Mr. Nakasone was badly smeared by the Recruit stockpiling scandal in the late 1980s which also brought down his successor, Noboru Takeshita, and is not seen as a candidate to replace Mr. Kaifu.

One man who did seem to be

Philippine senate close to rejecting bases pact

MANILA (R) — The Philippine Senate Saturday moved to the brink of rejecting a new military-bases treaty with the United States after eight senators signed a resolution declaring their opposition.

"For all intents and purposes, the treaty is dead," said Senator Ernesto Maceda, chairman of the Senate Defence Committee and one of the eight who signed the resolution. Eight votes is the minimum required to defeat the treaty.

The pact, which allows the United States to keep Subic Bay Naval Base for 10 more years while giving up Clark Air Base, needs 16 votes in the 23-member Senate to be ratified.

Washington has said it will start withdrawing its remaining forces from the Philippines if the treaty is not ratified by Sept. 16, when the current lease expires, ending almost a century of U.S. military presence in the former American colony.

President Corason Aquino had been lobbying hard in favour of the agreement, saying the heavily-indebted Philippines needs American military and financial help to revive its economy and modernise the armed forces.

"They can keep their money. The issue here is respect for the constitution," said Senator Rene Saguisag, referring to the \$203 million in yearly security assistance that Washington has offered in exchange for keeping Subic.

Senate President Jovito Salonga said a formal Senate vote rejecting the treaty could take place Monday, ahead of a planned pro-bases rally of up to a million people to be led by President Aquino outside the Senate.

Sen. Saguisag told reporters that around 12 senators, and possibly 13, were ready to vote against the accord, signed by the two countries last month.

Rejection of the treaty would trigger the withdrawal of 8,000 American servicemen from the Philippines and force the closure of Subic Bay naval dockyard, the largest U.S. ship repair yard and supply depot in Asia.

It could also spell major economic difficulties for the Philippines, because trade concessions and a scheme to reduce the country's \$29 billion external debt are tied to the treaty.

Anti-bases Senator Wigberto Tanada said it would be "an anachronism" if the Philippines retained Subic Naval Base with the end of the cold war and the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union.

Political sources said the only way for Mrs. Aquino and the pro-bases lobby to save the treaty would be to persuade the Senate to delay a formal vote and opt for a national referendum on the issue.

Opinion polls have found around two-thirds of the country's 60 million population support the presence of U.S. forces in the Philippines.

COLUMN

Royals host gala to save cathedral's medieval spire

SALISBURY (AP) — Thousands watched a spectacle of music, light and theatre on the grounds of Salisbury Cathedral to raise money to save the cathedral's famous medieval spire. Prince Charles and Princess Diana hosted the three-hour "symphony for the spire," which included music from opera stars Placido Domingo and Jessye Norman, readings by Charlton Heston, and two tonnes of fireworks. Prince Charles described Salisbury Cathedral's spire as a "medieval miracle."

"I wanted to do everything I could to help preserve this beautiful building and its remarkable spire," he said in an interview on Independent Television News. The cathedral spire — at 404 feet (123 metres) the tallest and most elegant in England — was the centrepiece of an extravaganza. A light show played on the 13th-century spire and the western front of the cathedral, 135 kilometres south-west of London. Acid rain and time have taken their toll on the crumbling, 6,400-tonne spire, which is built on foundations only four feet (1.2 metres) deep. Cathedral authorities say that without extensive restoration, it could collapse within 20 years.

Chinese crackdown on prostitutes 'curbs gonorrhoea'

PEKING (R) — A crackdown on prostitution in China has led to a sharp drop in cases of sexually transmitted diseases in major cities. The drop in cities such as Canton and Peking has averaged 30 per cent in the first half of this year, reversing the trend of the past several years, state media reported Saturday. More than 29,000 prostitutes and their customers were detained in a two-month crackdown in June and July, according to official figures. Saturday's reports said more than 40 per cent of prostitutes arrested were infected with disease. Altogether 44,117 cases of sexually transmitted diseases were reported in China in 1990. Gonorrhoea accounted for 60 per cent and syphilis 1.2 per cent. By the end of last year, 493 people were found to be infected with the virus that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and six people had full-blown AIDS.

Bangladesh women bartered for cattle to Indians

DHAKA (R) — Bangladesh women are being bartered for cattle to Indians at the border, Bangladesh's main opposition leader has charged. "Six cows and bullocks are exchanged for each Bangladeshi woman," Sheikh Hasina told a rally in Dhaka Friday of her Awami League Party. "This is not only shameful but we are surprised how the government tolerates such things." "Besides being traded to India for cattle, our women are passing agonising days in brothels in Pakistan and many other countries," Mr. Hasina said. She attacked Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia over the booming cross-border fish trade, saying "our prime minister is herself a woman and we think she has a special responsibility in this regard."

French taxman wants his cut from sexy messages

PARIS (R) — The taxman is threatening to ruin a favourite modern French pastime — sending sexy messages over the country's electronic mass communications network. The newspaper Liberation has revealed that the Budget Ministry had quietly slapped a 30 per cent surtax on revenue from "messages of a pornographic character" transmitted on the state-owned Minitel system. Six million subscribers use computer screens linked to domestic or office telephone lines for services ranging from an electronic telephone directory and transport timetable to a computer dating agency. France is plastered with advertisements of scantily-clad young women offering sexy conversation, and perhaps more, via the Minitel screen. Critics say companies use the system to advertise sexual services, although this is banned by law. A decree issued without publicity in July gave the Budget Ministry the discretionary power to define which "adult" communication services of a social nature have a pornographic orientation, Liberation said.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

KGB defector reunited with family

LONDON (R) — Soviet double agent Oleg Gordievsky had an emotional reunion with his wife and two daughters at a secret location Friday six years after he quit the KGB and fled to the West. It was the first time he had seen his wife, Leyla, and daughters Maria, 11, and Anna, 10, since he defected to Britain in 1985. "Our reunion was lovely. It was very emotional, with flowers everywhere," Mr. Gordievsky told Britain's Press Association news agency. He was speaking on his car telephone as he drove his family to his home in southern England. "I was already happy about the crumbling of the Communist empire. Now I have got personal as well as political and ideological satisfaction," he said. A beaming Leyla Gordievsky arrived earlier at London's Heathrow Airport from Moscow with her daughters who waved and smiled as they stepped out of the British Airways plane. "It is a very exciting moment of a very special day," she told reporters at an airport news conference. The family had been under round-the-clock surveillance by KGB agents until the security organisation's new chief Vadim Bukatin agreed to let the family go last week.

82 killed in Congo train accident

BRAZZAVILLE, Congo, (AP) — A passenger train crashed head-on into a freight train overnight in this central African nation. Official estimates of the death toll ranged from 39 to 82. Some victims remained trapped late Friday afternoon in a rail car that plunged down a 50-metre-deep ravine. A passenger train travelling from the Atlantic Ocean port of Pointe Noire collided with a freight train carrying timber from Brazzaville, the capital, officials said. The collision happened 30 kilometres outside Dolisie town, which is more than 400 kilometres south of Brazzaville. Government officials said 82 people had died by Friday morning but many people were seriously injured and more deaths were expected. State radio quoted the Congo Ocean Railroad as saying there were 39 dead and 52 injured. A hospital source at Pointe Noire said about 60 people were killed in the crash.

Noriega judge sets guidelines

MIAMI (R) — The judge in Manuel Noriega's drug trial has paved the way for lawyers to introduce controversial evidence about the ousted Panamanian strongman's relationship with U.S. intelligence agencies and Cuban leader Fidel Castro. In an order dated Aug. 7 and made public Friday, U.S. District Judge William Hoeverler said Mr. Noriega could introduce evidence that he "regularly acted as an intermediary between the United States and Cuba, often meeting with Castro at the behest, or with the approval, of the United States." But in a victory for the prosecution, he denied many of the defence's sweeping requests for confidential U.S. government documents. The 41-page ruling was released on the second day of jury selection in Gen. Noriega's drug trial, when prosecutors quizzed potential jurors on whether they could fairly evaluate testimony from Fidel Castro. "We anticipate there will be testimony by Fidel Castro about events that happened in Havana, Cuba," prosecutor Michael Patrick Sullivan said, although he added: "It's unlikely he (Castro) would appear in court in person." Sullivan did not suggest alternatives to personal appearances.

800 cholera cases reported in Mexico

MEXICO CITY (R) — Nearly 800 cholera cases have been diagnosed in Mexico since June and the disease was reported Friday to have reached Mexico City — where experts have said it could reach epidemic proportions. Eduardo Arvizu Marin, chief spokesman for the Mexican Health Ministry, said some 770 cholera cases had been confirmed in six of Mexico's 31 states and that an average of 70 new cases were cropping up every week. But he said he could neither confirm nor deny local news reports that cholera had reached Mexico City, where health experts have warned that poor sanitary conditions in densely populated working-class districts could help it spread like wild fire.

Sri Lanka party sacks 8 MPs

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lanka's ruling United National Party has expelled eight members who signed an impeachment motion against President Ranasinghe Premadasa, the state-owned Daily News said Saturday. Quoting a party spokesman, the newspaper said the party's working committee voted unanimously Friday night to expel the dissenters, among them former Education Minister Lalith Athulthumudali, former Labour Minister G.M. Premachandra and senior member of parliament Gamini Disanayake. The eight will lose their seats in parliament under the provisions of the constitution, the Daily News said. Premadasa had abstained from voting, it said.

Cubans mob dissident demonstrators

HAVANA (R) — A hostile crowd shouting "in Cuba there can be only one party" mobbed at least two political dissidents and stopped them from staging a demonstration outside the headquarters of Cuba's state security police, witnesses said. One man was shoved and kicked to the ground by a chanting, enraged group of men and women before being dragged into a police car by a uniformed officer. An unidentified man dressed in jeans and an open red check shirt, possibly a plain clothes security policeman, halted traffic by holding up his hand while this took place. Another group chanting "worm, worm" and other insults taunted another man, apparently a dissident, as he walked away from Villa Marista, headquarters of the Department of State Security, in the Havana suburb of Vibora. Opposition political parties are not permitted in Cuba under a single-party Socialist constitution passed in 1976.

Seoul to contribute to U.N. peacekeeping

SEOUL (R) — South Korea plans to contribute to United Nations peacekeeping activities when it becomes a full member of the world body, Foreign Minister Lee Sang-Ok said. "We, who defeated the (North Korean) invasion helped by a U.N. alliance, should contribute to U.N. peacekeeping movements... the government will consider gradual measures in that field," the domestic Yonhap News Agency quoted Mr. Lee as telling journalists Friday. A U.S.-led force under U.N. auspices fought on South Korea's side in the 1950-53 Korean War. Both North and South Korea will be formally admitted to the United Nations on Sept. 17. The two Koreas currently have observer status.

Peronists set to sweep elections

BUENOS AIRES (R) — President Carlos Menem's Peronist Party is set to sweep Argentina's mid-term elections Sunday in a massive vote of confidence in the government's anti-inflation programme. Opinion polls published at the end of the week show the Peronists increasing their lead in the race to renew half the 254-seat congress and choose provincial governors and local legislators. In Buenos Aires, the country's richest and most populous province, Vice President Eduardo Duhalde was given a lead of up to 20 per cent by independent surveys in the contest for governor. A week earlier, he had a 10-point advantage over Juan Carlos Pugliese of the main opposition radical party. The improvement in Peronist ratings result from a mounting tide of optimism over the government's economic programme. On Wednesday, Economy Minister Domingo Cavallo announced an August inflation rate of 1.3 per cent — the lowest in 17 years.

Hurd to visit Kenya, Zimbabwe

LONDON (R) — British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd flies to Kenya and Zimbabwe next week for talks that will include Kenya's human rights record, dismantling South African apartheid and the upcoming Commonwealth summit in Harare. "Human rights is something the secretary of state takes very seriously and he raises it at every opportunity when there is an issue to discuss," a Foreign Office official said when asked if Mr. Hurd would discuss human rights during his talks in Kenya. Mr. Hurd flies to Nairobi Wednesday from Moscow, where he will attend a European human rights conference, and goes on to Harare Thursday, leaving for home late Friday.